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SERMONS AND ADDRESSES.

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SERMONS

AND

ADDRESSES,

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

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REV. D. L. CARROLL, D.D.

PHILADELPHIA:
LINDSAY & BLAKISTON.
1846.



PREFACE.

PREFACES are seldom read, because they are often unnecessary. They are generally of an apologetic character, with a large spicing of mock modesty; craving, in behalf of the author, the indulgence of the public for the defects that may appear in his work, and recounting sundry disadvantages under which he has laboured in its preparation for the press; from all which it is presumed that it will be inferred how much better he would have done in more propitious circumstances. No man in health, and with the ordinary allotment of life, is entitled to the privilege of making an apology, or of being heard in it, for any thing that he chooses to publish voluntarily, and not by necessity.

The author of this volume feels justified in giving a reason for that lack of accuracy and polish which will be found in the style of some of these sermons and addresses. His health has been so feeble for months past, that he has not only not been able to re-write the discourses, but has with difficulty borne the confinement and labour of looking them over, and rendering them legible by correcting the chirographical and other trifling errors. Written amidst all the cares of pastoral life, and in the hurry of weekly preparation for the pulpit, these sermons are now published with little alteration of the original drafts.

In the prospectus it was intimated, that the work would mainly consist of occasional sermons, and of addresses and lectures, &c. The desire of comprising in the volume what might promise to be the most extensively and enduringly useful, has induced the author to change his original purpose, and to include fewer occasional, and more strictly practical sermons in the work, and to exclude several addresses and lectures which he intended to insert. made the selections with this design, and acting according to the best judgment he could form in the case, it is quite possible that the volume may disappoint some of his former parishioners who may remember sermons which they have heard him deliver, and which are regarded by them as much better than any that are found amongst the number now published. In conversation with the author, some of his friends have expressed great surprise and regret to learn that the present volume will not include two sermons which he preached about three years ago, on "The government of the thoughts."

In reference to this case, and to other sermons that some may be disappointed in not finding in the work, he would say, that should it please a benignant Providence to prolong his life, and grant him a sufficient degree of health, he designs to publish another volume, of equal size, and perhaps of better selection, provided his friends after reading the present shall feel disposed to encourage him to do so.

He has had none of the pangs and throes of authorship so keenly felt by those who write for fame. Man's judgment in reference to this or to any thing else pertaining to him, is now a matter of little moment to him. The preparation of this volume for the press, has furnished employment for hours that otherwise might have moved heavily, and given rise to a slender hope of usefulness even at the sunset of life's closing day. And if the ever blessed God in the depths of his condescending goodness through Jesus Christ, is pleased to accompany the truths contained in this work by his Holy Spirit to the con-

sciences and the hearts of readers, promoting the edification of Christians, and the awakening and conversion of sinners, the author's most ardent wishes, aspirings, and anticipations will then have been realized. To Him who can alone give it success, and in whose hands are the hearts of all men, this volume is now humbly and cheerfully committed, by

THE AUTHOR.

Newark, Del., July 20, 1846.

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SERMONS.

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THE METHOD BY WHICH THE CHRISTIAN'S FAITH BECOMES VICTORIOUS OVER THE WORLD.

"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"—1 John v. 5.

The easy conquest made by the world in all ages over the great majority of its inhabitants, is one of the most unquestionable facts of history. Admiration of its heroes-the pursuit of its wealth-its honours-its pleasures-its power-submission to its maxims and customs, and yielding to its dominant spirit, have formed the character, shaped the course, employed the activities, given play to the hopes and fears, and fixed the destinies of the great majority of mankind. Occasionally we find an individual, under those better impulses that sometimes visit man despite the ruin of his moral and nobler nature, striving by the precepts of a refined philosophy to overcome the world. He endeavours to look at it with the eye of a weeping philosopher as a deceitful, passing pageant—he fortifies himself in the conviction, that mind and moral qualities are infinitely superior to the most dazzling things of earth-attempts to discipline his passions and susceptibilities till they shall be proof against its seductive allurements-betakes

himself to employments and pleasures purely intellectual-practises an outward morality, and persuades himself that he has gained a splendid victory over the world! Yet in truth he is still only an "upper" and higher class of servant to the world. He does not wallow in its mire trodden under foot by the base things of earth. But the point of his elevation is only a mound of somewhat refined clay, not a " heavenly place in Christ Jesus." The light that surrounds him there is earthly sunshine, not the pure and healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness. The morality that adorns his outward man, is this world's morality, not those graces of the Spirit that robe the soul in the livery of heaven. No philosophy—no device of mortals—no power of human resolve nor gigantic struggle of his unaided powers, can ever disenthral man from the environments of his fallen condition and give him the victory over the world. Amidst all the experiments ever made in reference to this achievement, and all the mighty conflicts of man with the world, but one thing has ever enabled him to overcome it, and that is, the faith of the gospel. "For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." That this is the great, the only means of this sublime moral victory, is manifest from the language of the text: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" This question is obviously put as unanswerable. It is equivalent to the strongest conceivable affirmation, that no one but he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, can possibly overcome the world. Note

here, for a moment, the kind of faith which alone can secure so splendid a triumph. "He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." Not he that has a correct, speculative faith in the Bible as a revelation from God-not he that has a sort of philosophic, poetic belief in Christ as a moral hero in history—as a great and good man—a prophet or teacher sent from God, or a magnanimous martyr, sealing the sincerity of his convictions of truth, and vindicating the loftiness and purity of his motives by his blood. No! this is not the kind of faith that crowns man a victor over this alluring, engrossing, tempting, triumphing world. "He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God "-the man who believes "with the heart" in THE WHOLE character of the Saviour precisely as it is revealed, the man who is "born of God," and to whose soul the Holy Ghost, having taken of the things of Christ, hath shown them, and wrought there a simple, vital belief, that "Jesus," who saves his people from their sins, "is the Son of God"-is the almighty, sovereign, all-sufficient, atoning Saviour, for him personally, as a lost sinner-this is the victorious believer. It is this view of Jesus Christ, which as a great fact, an overwhelming reality, blazes in upon his soul by faith, lighting it up to spiritual discernment, and awakening in it a new and mighty life, by which he makes the splendid conquest over the world!

It shall be my object, in the subsequent remarks, to inquire how this belief that Jesus is the Son of God, operates to overcome the world?

1. It does so by bringing to the view of the soul

a totally different style of character in the Lord Jesus, from that which the world admires and imitates.

The heroic character, is the one which figures in all profane history, from the earliest ages to the present hour. The warrior, in the exciting and tragic extremes of his fortune—with a physical courage that scales walls-mounts battlementsstorms forts—sacks cities—desolates provinces—conquers empires, and crushes beneath the iron tread of his prowess millions of his fellow men; this is the character, however dark, depraved and desperate in other respects, which attracts the world's admiration and fires its irrepressible emulation. This is the master, model character of greatness and glory which the world presents. For, if the statesman, orator, poet, philosopher, or scholar, be accounted great by the world, he must have something of this element of the heroic in his character. He must have a certain hardihood and dauntless daring, which, with worldly motives and for worldly ends, will risk the soul, defy destiny, outrage the laws of heaven. and be willing to die, provided it be in a sufficiently magnificent catastrophe! Now the world, by presenting this as its great, model character, and appealing thus to the combined passions of ambition, brute courage, the love of fame and of glory, makes an easy conquest of the hearts of men in the very morning of life, and holds them ever after in willing subjection. But to the man who believes that "Jesus is the Son of God," a totally different character is presented for his admiration, love and imitation. The clear and comprehensive convictions of his faith

give living reality to the true character of the Lord Jesus Christ, and present it in its proportions and infinite perfectness as a whole, radiant with a celestial light. It is a character diametrically the opposite of the world's model character of greatness and glory. Benevolence wide as the world, weeping over its woes, and yearning to save it at any sacrifice, is the great foundation element in this character. Another striking trait is a profound submission to the will of God, even amidst scenes of personal suffering the most tragic the world has ever witnessed. What meekness, too, enters into the Saviour's character, that which the world pronounces to be "the virtue only of cowards," but which God declares "blessed." He "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself." "When he was reviled, he reviled not again." "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." And yet with all this, what a sublime moral courage was his! A courage, by which, for the space of forty days in the solitude of the wilderness, he battled with the gloomy Prince of Darkness, spurned the splendid bribe to his virtue of the kingdoms of this world and all their glory, and triumphed in solitary majesty over all the principalities and powers of hell! A courage by which he sustained himself under the sorrows of Gethsemane, the shock of the world's malice at Pilate's bar and in Herod's court, calmly offered up his soul to God a sacrifice for sin, and died a victor amidst the mysterious agonies, the gloom and the glory of Calvary! This is the character that Heaven presents as its model of greatness and

moral grandeur. Faith realizes, sees, feels this character in its infinite loveliness and attractions. For to him that believeth Christ "is precious"— "the fairest amongst ten thousand, one altogether lovely." Faith loves, admires, adores this character, and fires the soul with an unconquerable desire to imitate it, to be conformed to it and fashioned after this celestial pattern.

Now will not the faith that gazes on the pure lustre of such a character blind its possessor to that false glare which surrounds the world's character of greatness and glory? Will he not turn away in disgust from the earthly model? And while the pure and perfect character of Christ is glowing before the eye of his faith and burning in upon his soul its own bright lineaments, will he not triumph over the world, nor feel nor fear its allurements to his ambition?

II. A second way in which the belief that Jesus is the Son of God operates to overcome the world, is by bringing to view as a REALITY the perfect example of noble self-denial which Christ has given. Self-denial is indispensable to a conquest over the world. As this is an extremely difficult duty, especially when it extends to "denying ourselves all ungodliness and worldly lusts," we want the aid, in its performance, of something more than bare precepts and prohibitions. We want a living example—we want the very pattern of the thing done—and done by one of like susceptibilities, passions and powers, and in like circumstances with ourselves.

The world, of course, has no such example to present. Her great men have denied themselves many

worldly gratifications, but it has been only that they might indulge in others and greater. The perfect example of noble self-denial which the Son of God has given is lost on the unbelieving multitude. To them it has neither "form nor comeliness," life nor reality. They read the history of his magnanimous sacrifices and severe self-denials just as they peruse the tale of some hero of romance in the fictitious trials, struggles and battlings of his imaginary existence. On them the example of Christ's self-denial exerts no influence, and they cannot avail themselves of its ennobling inspirations to enable them to overcome the world. But to him who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, in what a vivid light does the Saviour's example of self-denial appear! It is the example of the Son of God. It is the acting out, the intelligible embodiment and exemplification of those great principles by which He overcame the world. Faith seizes on it as a living, bright, glowing reality-contemplates it from its commencement till its close with a profound admiration of its truthfulness, sublimity, perfection. The man who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, believes too with all sincerity and fulness of conviction that for a season Christ emptied himself of "that glory which he had with the Father before the world was," that "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor," that though "he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Though the resources of the world were his by the right of the highest and most absolute proprie20

torship, yet he was born in a manger,-reared in a carpenter's family,-wrought with his own hands, "being subject unto his parents," and in the days of his public ministry, when blessing the world with the richest gifts of Divine beneficence, he emphatically exclaimed, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."-While others slept, "he arose when it was yet a great while before day, and went out into a mountain alone to pray."-When weary, hungry, and thirsty, as he sat at the well of Samaria, he was deaf to the clamours of his own bodily wants, that he might improve the occasion to feed immortal souls famishing for the bread of life. But it is the closing acts of his self-denial on which faith especially dwells. The meek and unresisting bearing of his spotless mind as he endured all the ignominious, sad, agonizing preliminaries to his crucifixion, when by a simple thought he could have dashed all the authors of these indignities and sufferings into remediless destruction;—the cheerfulness with which he "endured the cross," willingly making his own soul the great sacrifice offered up to God through the Eternal Spirit, to redeem man and disenthral him from the world—the depths of mysterious sorrows, of concealed, unearthly woes into which he voluntarily stepped as he trod the winepress alone, as he performed the august, awful rite of offering up himself a sacrifice to God. O who can compute the all-controlling power of so sublime an example of self-denial on him who really believes that Jesus is the Son of God! How it rouses the energies of the undying soul-elevates its aimsfires its high resolves, its infinite aspirations, and flushes it with the hope of victory! When the believer in his spiritual conflict keeps this example bright before the eye of his faith, he feels a new strength in the struggle; he feels that conquest is practicable, and rises in the might and the majesty of the "inner man," and overcomes the world.

III. Another way in which faith in Christ operates to overcome the world, is by the view which it takes of the Exalted Pursuits of the Saviour. The pursuits by which the world enslaves and holds its votaries are quite notorious. Military glorythe pomp and show of wealth—the bauble of fame -the distinctions of a mad ambition, and the tumultuous pleasures of prodigality and dissipation—these are all she can offer her subjects for the employment of their immortal activities. And these are sufficient to overcome worldly minds—to engross and exhaust their powers, unless they can be made to see that there are loftier and nobler pursuits, and to feel their divine attractions. For the inherent energies of mind, under the impulses of its powerful passions, will have active employment of some kind. Now earth cannot present a pursuit higher than herself, nor point out the path by which the sternest spirit of mortal is to overcome the world. But he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, sees in Christ's pursuits a highway above the world, worthy the powers, the dignity and the ultimate destination of mind. Faith fully accredits that simple yet sublime record of the Saviour, "He went about doing good." It sees him "travelling in the greatness of his strength," in that glorious sphere of God-like benevolence, in which he ministers alike to the mightiest and the most minute wants of man's mortal and immortal nature. Supreme consecration to God, and a self-sacrificing devotion to the best interests of man, characterized the Saviour's whole career on earth. When but twelve years of age, he was "about his Father's business." It was obvious that he always had a great object in view. Its magnitude and grandeur may be judged of by the fact that it was the work which the Father gave him to do! To manifest the glory of the eternal Father, and save this sin-stricken, sinking world, this was the object of his exalted pursuit on earth. For, at the very close of life, he exclaimed, "I have manifested thy name to the men which Thou gavest me out of the world. I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." This work taxed his activities and gave play to all the pure and benevolent affections of his nature. He pursued it with a perseverance steady as timewith a zeal that no sorrows could quench—with a courage that never blenched before the opposition of earth or hell-with a self-denial that faltered at no sacrifice-with a divine energy that flagged not amidst the groans and anguish, the cries and tears, the great sweat of his agony in the garden, nor failed him amidst the sublime and melancholy glories of the cross, where he triumphantly exclaimed, "It is finished!" Now the Christian's faith gives a reality to this pursuit of the Son of God. To him it is not as the fictitious career of a hero of romance. Nav. his faith makes him feel that his regenerated powers fit him to enter on the same noble pursuit of glorifying God and blessing a lost world—that Christ reclaimed them from the ruins of the fall, that these capacities might be so employed. He feels himself invited and urged, with all his renovated energies, to rise at once to the employment and the dignity of a "co-worker with Christ," in illustrating the richest glories of the Divine nature and bestowing the blessing of an eternal redemption on man. Faith makes this all a bright reality, and sees this course lighted up by the sunshine of that active benevolence which creates the noon of heaven itself, and the soul breaks away from all the alluring pursuits of earth, overcomes the world and pants and burns to enter and run this heavenly race.

IV. Faith in Christ operates to overcome the world by the strong and captivating views which it takes of the elevated enjoyments of the Saviour. Such is the economy of mind, that it must have resources of enjoyment, as well as objects of pursuit. It has other desires, besides those of mere activity. The love of happiness is the master passion of our nature. The craving of our immortal part for some satisfying element of joy, is as stern and uncompromising as that of physical hunger. Now when the soul can discover no higher enjoyments than those presented by the world, it will necessarily grasp at them as its greatest attainable good. This is the reason why the blinded multitude of the ungodly are overcome, and led captive by the polluted pleasures of the world. They have no power of vision to penetrate the spiritual. They "receive not the things of the Spirit," and of course cannot discern spiritual joys. Nor does the world present any example of one individual of its votaries living on higher and holier enjoyments, than its perishable pleasures. But he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, has a clear and captivating view of the elevated enjoyments of the Saviour. For, though he was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs," clouded and saddened as was his soul by the weight of our sins, and the work of a world's atonement, yet occasionally through the gloom, breaks the light of a transcendent spiritual joy. We hear of him rejoicing in spirit, and giving thanks to the Father for the glorious display of a high and absolute sovereignty. Again, we hear of "the joy that was set before him," and for which "he endured the cross, despising the shame." Now faith penetrates into these secrets of a Saviour's joys. It sees that his human soul was made happy, by the same spiritual laws that confer happiness on the regenerated soul of the believer. The Saviour, as man, found his supreme happiness in God alone, and sought it from no inferior source. The range of his spiritual contemplations, and the play of his benevolent affections which furnished his joys, were the same as those of the true believer, except in so far as they related to his atonement, and were unmarred by imperfection or sin. He held intimate and holy communion with the Eternal mind, and meditated with a celestial joy on the infinite glories of its attributes. He dwelt on the deep counsels of Jehovah—surveyed with admiration those vast works of his hand through the universe, that read their lessons of his "eternal power and Godhead"-of creating, upholding, and governing wisdom and goodness to all intelligences-he considered the

ways of God in his providence over the world, and marked, with an unmingled delight, the operation of that wide and wondrous system of complicated and apparently conflicting agents, which "work together for good to those who love him," and effect, with infinite certainty, his great purposes of benevolence on earth. Faith may imagine with what blissful emotions the Son of God contemplated the stupendous glories of that scheme of man's redemption, in which his human and divine natures took so illustrious a part, and the issues of which will effect more good in the moral government of God, and will diffuse a wider, more intense and enduring happiness through the intelligent universe, than perhaps any other event in his eternal reign!

The Saviour exercised the spirit of cheerful, implicit, universal obedience, and profound submission to the will of God—he exercised supreme love to God—devout gratitude and holy confidence, and had the happiness attending these exercises in the assurance of the Divine approbation and the testimony of a good conscience. As man, Christ had that immortal hope, which anchors on the infinite God as its object now, and contemplates the possession of a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" in his immediate presence hereafter. And while he sojourned here as man, he knew more than the very best of his disciples do, the luxury of doing good to others.

These were the sources from which he derived his holy joys. Now he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, has a *spiritual discernment* of this exalted happiness of the Saviour. His faith is competent,

measurably, to understand and appreciate this high and holy enjoyment of his Lord. He sees too that through Christ strengthening him it is attainable by him—that Jesus has redeemed him in order that he might attain it, and come at once and drink from this pure, living fountain, and thirst no more for earthly streams. He sees that these lofty joys are adapted to the wants, and in accordance with the renewed tastes and aspirations of his immortal nature. His relish for worldly pleasures is gone; how can they hold him captive longer? He breaks for ever over their enchanted circle, overcomes and rises above the world, by a faith on the Son of God, which opens his whole soul to that confluence of light and joy, which blessed the human nature of the Saviour!

V. Lastly. Faith in the Son of God operates to overcome the world by the light which the crucifixion throws on the true character of the world—the worth of the soul, and the magnitude of its eternal interests and destiny.

There is but one place where the true character and moral position of this world can be ascertained; and that is, at the cross of Christ. When viewed by mortals from any other point, it is seen in a false light. Come, then, let us go by faith to Calvary. We desire for once to see this world, which boasts its conquests over immortal millions, in some degree as God sees it. What a spectacle is here revealed! Who is that illustrious victim coming hither meekly bearing his cross? Though "his visage is marred more than any man's"—though he has been "scourged till you might tellall his bones"—though his countenance is pale with more than mor-

tal sorrow, the traces of majesty are there still-a mysterious glory in disastrous eclipse-a commingling of divine calmness with human agitation-of divine strength with mortal frailty-a blending of benign compassion with a sorrowful indignation! Who is this? "The Son of God," the maker, upholder, and benefactor of the world! What mean the infuriated mob as they now close around him, and nail him to the fatal wood, and suspend him on the accursed tree? What mean their brutal taunts—their mockery of his death-thirst? What mean his own inscrutable agonies of body and soul? What means the deep and heart-rending pathos of that cry-"My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?" What mean that bowing of the head and giving up the ghost, under a mysterious weight of woes, such as the universe has witnessed, and will witness but once? What means that vast sympathy of universal nature with this illustrious sufferer, hanging the heavens in sackcloth and shrouding the world in more than sepulchral gloom, convulsing the earth, rending the rocks, opening the graves, and vivifying the very ashes of the long-forgotten dead? The whole significancy of these tragic wonders which stand alone in the moral drama of universal being is this-the Son of God is here making an atonement, by this sacrifice of himself, for the sins of the world! What think you of the world now? A world that could inflict such a death on its incarnate, immaculate Maker and Redeemer; a world that required such an expiation for its guilt-such a means as this august sacrifice of Christ himself, for its recovery and reconciliation to God! O what a world as seen in the light of the

crucifixion! How fallen, accursed, dark, degraded, "dead in trespasses and in sins," must it be. "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." It is a world in revolt, and at enmity with its God—a mass of moral death—"the whole world lying in wickedness!"

Now, will it be difficult to divorce him who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, from a world like this? The cross of Christ was the secret by which Paul was crucified to the world, and the world to him. And the faith that plants itself at that cross now, and takes its view of all earthly things from that point, will overcome the world still, and win for the soul the noblest conquest to be made this side of heaven.

And now what estimate will the true believer put on the value of the soul as beheld in the light of the crucifixion? These strange sorrows—these infinite sufferings, and glories of the great atonement are the price at which God has valued the soul! This is Infinite Wisdom's appraisement of its worth. The cross seals the valuation as just, in the blood of its divine sacrifice. Faith realizes, feels, trembles under this estimate of the soul, as a fact, an indubitable truth. blazing in the light of the cross. Can the believer then suffer this guilty world to enslave his soul of such value? Oh! no! He now appreciates the tremendous emphasis and point of Christ's question: "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Thus he that really believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, carrying about with him that undying conviction of the

worth of the soul impressed on him by the cross, cannot for a moment consent to barter his for the whole world; and thus he overcomes the world with all the splendid bribes it offers him, feeling himself infinitely rich in the endowments of that immortal spirit, for whose redemption Heaven paid such a price as can be adequately uttered only in the sublime eloquence of the crucifixion!

While the believer still lingers at the cross, what an overwhelming impression does he there receive of the magnitude of the soul's eternal interests and destinies. There, for the first, he realizes the truth, and begins to feel the import of the immortality of the soul. For faith has vitally united his soul to Him who is the life, as well as the light of men. What must be the nature of that soul! What its vast powers of life and action-what its mighty capacities of progress in holiness, and perfection in bliss!-what grand relations must it hold to God and his universewhat stupendous interests must it have, extending through the whole empire of intelligences, and running through an eternal duration to make it worth the infinite sacrifice that redeemed it, and worthy that glorious bond of union that binds it for ever to the Son of God!

Now faith realizes all this, and makes the soul to stand in awe at its own august immortal interests! It is the province of faith to look from Calvary directly into eternity. Thither the crucifixion points the soul to a "purchased possession," an unfading and incorruptible inheritance whose glories will shine on with augmenting splendour after the fires of the final conflagration shall have burnt up this world, and

blackened its brightest, fairest things in eternal night! Yea, to him who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, heaven with its light and song, its triumphs and immortal transports of joy, is a living felt reality. That is the final destiny of his soul. He believes it as verily as he believes in his own existence. And, from first to last, in all his conflicts with this tempting world, he feels a sweet, affectionate, holy confidence in the Lord Jesus, and believes that He will bring his soul off more than conqueror, and grant it to sit down with Him on his throne, even as He overcame and has set down on his Father's throne. Now, how will the petty interests and destinies of timehow will the world in all its glory appear to a soul with heaven thus open to its faith, and overpowering the vision with its eternal splendours? That soul has overcome the world! Faith has winged it with untiring pinions, and it is already on its upward flight, with earth and skies beneath its feet, mounting still and gazing like the eagle on that great central Sun, which is bringing within the sphere of its light and attraction all the redeemed and the holy of the universe!

This subject, in the first place, may furnish a test by which professing Christians can try their faith. Of what kind is your faith? There is but one kind that can ever convey you safely to heaven—that is, the faith that causes you actually to overcome the world! Is this the distinguishing characteristic of your faith? Has your belief that Jesus is the Son of God, destroyed your admiration of the world's character of greatness, and brought you to love, adore, and imitate the perfect character of the Saviour?

Has it crucified you to the world and all its sinful indulgences, and brought you close in the footsteps of Christ's example of noble self-denial? Has your faith cast out from you the demon of a worldly spirit-crushed your avarice and ambition-diverted your feet from earthly pursuits, and directed all your spiritual energies into the same exalted sphere of action with the Son of God? Has your faith disgusted you with the polluted pleasures of the world, divorced you from them, and led you to pant after and participate in the elevated enjoyments of your Lord? In a word, has it led you to the cross, there to learn the true character of the world, the worth of the soul, and the grandeur of its immortal interests and destinies, so that, by the cross you are actually crucified to the world, and the world to you? Professing Christians, these are questions of awful import! "Examine vourselves, whether ye be in "THIS kind of faith." Your eternal life is at stake here! For "he that believeth not, shall not see life." There is but one sort of faith which wins heaven, and but one description of character, who is now spiritually alive and shall live for evermore—"he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God," with a "faith that works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world."

We learn from this subject in the second place, that the Christian's conflict is a great one. He has not merely to contend with an occasional obstacle encountered at intervals along his pilgrimage. It is not some isolated, single-handed form of evil with which he has to do battle. It is the whole world, with its multiform, ever present appliances of allurement and temptation. The whole world in

the gigantic power of its maxims and customs, its pervading, perverted, almost omnipotent public sentiment, its sympathies, fellowships and confederacies, its false shame, its scoffs and sneers, its malignant calumnies and relentless persecutions, its numbers and dreaded majorities-the whole world thus armed and equipped and aided by the inspirations, the wiles and the power of the Prince of darkness, is the enemy on the one hand, and the Christian with the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, and the helmet of hope, in lone antagonism on the other!! O! is not this a great, a fearful conflict! Ought not the Christian to prepare himself to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ! What are the battles of an Alexander, a Cæsar or a Bonaparte, compared with this tremendous fight of faith! They struggled with flesh and blood only—the Christian "with principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places." O does he not need the whole armour of God, and incessant supplies of a divine energy to wield it! Yea, blessed be God, with these weapons of his warfare, and through Christ strengthening him, he can pull down the strong-holds of sin, Satan and the world, and win for his soul the laurels of a victory unfading and immortal!

Finally. Here is an object of legitimate ambition presented to the ardent aspirations of the young man. Youthful hearer, if you ever look thoughtfully in upon your own mind, and take cognizance of what is passing there, you must have noticed, at times, the waking up of strange powers, a restless and uncontrollable desire for action—a fresh, un-

wasted might, inherent, and forming part of your young nature which finds no suitable object in the ordinary pursuits of life, and which tempts you to dare great things and to desire to grapple with objects of magnitude and grandeur. You have passions capable of tremendous impulsive force, and a faculty of high hope adapted to enlist you in splendid enterprise. What think you, young man, of the Christian's great conflict with the world? Does it not furnish you the only arena and object really adequate and sufficiently ample for "the combat and career" of your immortal energies? Yes, God gave you those powers, and waked them into activity in this spring-time of your being, for the very purpose of their enlistment in this conflict. Is not this a great object? The conquest of the world, not by physical force, but by that loftier, sterner strength that will enable you to govern yourself, to rule in majesty over your own spirit! Is not the interest at stake in this conflict great? Your own soul's eternal salvation, the happiness of your own being for immortality! Are not the weapons proffered you of heavenly origin and temper? "The whole armour of Gon!" What a panoply for a young soul!! Is not the prize of victory infinitely alluring? A crown of righteousness, a throne of glory, a "kingdom incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens." Rise, young man, rouse your deathless energies, and in humble dependence on God grapple fearlessly with the gigantic foe, and he who hath called you to be "a good soldier" will crown you an immortal victor!

SERMON II.

THE NATURE AND ADVANTAGES OF DRAWING NIGH TO GOD.

"Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."-James iv. 8.

No inspired maxim is perhaps more universally applicable than this, "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." And it is specially desirable that Christians should speedily learn the practical lesson, that while negligent of duty and far from God they have no right to expect the manifestations of his fayour to their souls. I am persuaded that professors of religion often cherish mere wishes that their spiritual condition were better, which are like "the desire of the slothful, that killeth." I call them mere wishes, because they are not the holy thirstings after God, the living God, which the psalmist possessed, or they would be accompanied by a different course of action. It is very possible that such empty wishes may be mistaken for a fervent, scriptural desire after the presence of God. It is probable that some may have wondered why they have prayed; -earnestly prayed, for light and comfort and sanctification, and vet are denied these blessings. But if they have regarded any iniquity in their hearts, or have failed faithfully to employ all the means which

God has connected with the attainment of these blessings, then there is nothing wonderful in their case. It is in exact accordance with God's settled plan of dealing, even with his own children. That plan is to connect the faithful performance of DUTY with all the privileges and enjoyments of the Christian life. And even the most gratuitous blessings which God in his sovereignty bestows, he will be "inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." The truth of these remarks is fully established by the words of our text, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."

Let us, in the first place, attend to what is implied in drawing nigh to God—and secondly, Notice some of the advantages resulting from the fulfilment of the promise, "He will draw night to you."

I. What is implied in drawing nigh to God? It is hardly necessary for me to remark, that this language is figurative. In a literal sense the terms "nigh to God," or "far from God," have no pertinency. In one view every thing is alike near or alike afar from him. God is omnipresent; throughout vast immensity, as to knowledge, power and absolute control, He is equally present in all places. Physically we live, and move, and have our being in him, and he is not far from any one of us. No remove that we could make in mere space would take us any farther from God. If we "ascend into heaven, he is there; if we make our bed in hell, behold he is there; if we take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall his hand find us, and his right hand hold us." The term, draw nigh to God, then, must refer to the spiritual movements of the soul, not to a mere change of local position. Were the soul of an unconverted sinner placed at the foot of the throne in heaven, it would still be true, figuratively and spiritually, that it would be far from God? Nearness to God describes the state, not the location of a soul. To draw nigh to God pre-supposes an acquaintance with him, and reconciliation to him through the blood of the atonement. The natural estrangement of the heart from God is very appropriately expressed by the metaphor of distance between objects. Hence Paul says to the Ephesians, in reference to their former pagan state, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." In order to put the soul in a condition in which it can draw nigh to God, the native enmity of the heart must be slainrepentance must place a broad and deep separation between that soul and its sins, and it must take refuge by faith in that blood of sprinkling under whose covert alone the miserable sinner can approach a holy God and not be consumed. Jesus Christ must be recognised, accepted, believed on and confided in as "the way" by which the soul is to draw nigh to God. This being done, the state of mind indicated by the metaphor of being nigh to God implies a devout recognition of God in every thing by which he makes himself known. When the soul looks abroad on creation and considers the works of God's hands, when contemplating the evidence thus furnished of divine power, wisdom and benevolence shining not less in the gilding of the insect's wing

than in the effulgence of suns and stars, and then looks through nature up to nature's God in devout adoration, love and gratitude, that soul draws nigh to God. It feels itself in his holy presence as manifested by the wonders of the creation! And natural beauty has its brightest charm and natural sublimity its most overawing majesty from the soul's vivid recognition of the all-pervading presence of Jehovah. Again.-When the soul contemplates the ways of God-the manifestations of his character made in his dealings with our world-his providence over the race and his particular providence over the individual, when in view of all the perfections which God thus acts out to his intelligent creatures here on earth, the soul sees his hand in all-recognises his control over all the events of its own personal history, and acknowledges him the wise and good and glorious God, not less good in the dark and trying scenes of adversity than in unclouded prosperity-when "gladness wings its favoured hour" and wafts its grateful thoughts to heaven, and when penitence, humiliation and submission lay it prostrate under God's afflicting hand, feeling that he hath done it, the soul draws nigh to God! It feels itself within the very grasp of his hand, encompassed by a present God in these his merciful or afflictive dealings, and raises its song of gratitude or makes its supplication to him accordingly. So in respect to the word of God,—when the soul peruses those sacred pages and recognises their truths as in very deed the word of God-when with profound reverence it pauses over this communication from Jehovah, submitting all its powers to the authority of his oracles, raising its cry to him for the spirit of obedience, that it may be wholly swayed by his commandments, then the soul draws near to God. In attendance on the means of grace, when the soul realizes the sanctuary to be the house of God, regards it as the immediate presence chamber of the King of kings and Lord of lords, enters it with a subdued and solemn frame of spirit, and in its songs of praise, its supplications, its instructions, and the dispensation of its ordinances, recognises God's presence-God's authority, God's goodness and mercy, and through these means holds communion with him, then the soul may be said to draw nigh to God. This is the general state or habit of mind implied by the metaphorical phrase in the text. But I suppose, that the text also implies a direct and definite exercise of the soul in the work of careful, importunate, persevering prayer. We may regard the apostle in the text as virtually saying to his readers, "There are reasons why you should make a formal and solemn advance toward God; why you should not be satisfied with the ordinary outward service which you render to him. Let those sins which have separated between you and God be confessed with a broken heart, and forsaken without a reserve for ever. Let your formality and coldness in prayer be at once abandoned. Your forgetfulness of God in his works and ways, in the word and ordinances of his grace, cease-let your hearts be set in order and "frame your doings to seek the Lord,"-let every thing that might by any possibility interpose a barrier between your souls and the fullest and freest communion with your God be carefully taken out of the way,

and thus emptied and humbled in simplicity and godly sincerity, draw nigh to God in fervent, persevering prayer, determined never to cease till the blessing be obtained. If you do this, and do it under the conviction that your eternal life is in it, God will "draw nigh to you." And now what will be the advantages of the fulfilment of this blessed promise in the text,—"God will draw nigh to you?" This was the second thing proposed for our consideration.

I. If God draws nigh to a soul, it will free that soul from darkness and doubts as to its own state, and give it also delightful views of the Divine perfections. Light and love are the elements of Jehovah's being. When He manifests these to a creature, he is said to draw nigh to that creature. When, through the blood of the great Atonement, and in answer to fervent prayer, God manifests himself to a soul, light, and peace, and gracious assurance of that soul's spiritual state must be the result. It is when sin has provoked him to withdraw his presence, that darkness and doubts come over the soul. It is distance from the "Father of lights" that creates spiritual gloom, and wraps the mind in a midnight of despondency. When the great "Sun of Righteousness" is veiled, there is a strange and misty indistinctness over all spiritual objects. The soul gropes at noon-day, not knowing whither it goeth. Fears and doubts are in the way; and the feeble and flickering ray of hope still left only renders the darkness visible. But when God draws nigh to the soul, "'tis night no more"-the darkness rolls away at his presence, as shadows flee at opening day. The soul has now the proper medium through which to see spiritual things - the light of God's presence. In this light its perceptions are clear and correct. It sees its own spiritual condition. It rejoices in the evidence which a "God nigh at hand" gives it of its acceptance with him and its interest in the eternal blessings of his redemption. This gracious sense of God's presence chases away the clouds that had gathered over it, and banishes the doubts that had well nigh driven it to despondency. All within it is bright and calm again, because God has returned and drawn nigh to it in the light and love of his glorious presence. One hour beneath the beams of God's approving countenance will do more to settle the great question of the soul's safety than an age of perplexing inquiry in cold and gloomy distance from him. And while this is one blessed result of God drawing nigh to the soul, another, equally blessed, is the clear and satisfactory views which the soul thus obtains of His divine perfections. All the erroneous and degrading views which the wicked entertain respecting God are easily explained by the inspired declaration, "God is far above out of their sight." The rays of his glory seem lost in the immense moral distance between him and the wicked. And while the Christian permits his iniquities like the wind to carry him away and to provoke God to retire from him, he has no vivid, transforming views of the glorious perfections of Jehovah. True, there is still to the eye even of feeble faith, a halo of uncreated glory there, but it is only like the glimmering of the distant fixed star that an atom between the natural eye and that object will utterly obscure; but when God draws nigh to the soul, all the glories of

his nature seem to shine around it in a new and intense splendour. God seems to pass by before it, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth." How glorious to the soul appear the power, wisdom, goodness, justice, faithfulness, truth, mercy and grace of a nigh PRESENT God! This is the place to study the attributes of the Divine nature. O the depths of his counsels, the wonders of his condescension, the mysteries of his eternal love-the yearnings of his infinite forbearance, as read by the soul in the shinings of God's face! When he comes nigh and removes the veil, what ineffable beauty, what lineaments divine does his face wear! It is then the soul obtains such views of the infinite perfections of Jehovah, that it exclaims, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee." There is a light and a warmth in every attribute of a present God that transfuse themselves through the very soul! One hour near to God, in his holy presence, will impart more enlarged, exalted and rapturous views of his character than could be acquired by a lifetime of cool and distant speculation.

II. If God draws nigh to a soul, this will preserve it from the power of temptation, and from the influence of all those causes that combine to retard the Christian's progress in holiness.

Temptation consists in some sinful or trifling enjoyment assuming to the soul a false magnitude or value, so that it will induce the soul to seek that enjoyment in violation of the will of God, and in disregard of its own true and highest interests. Temp-

tations derive all their controlling power from the state of the mind at the time they are presented. No external allurement has in itself the power of seducing the immortal mind. It is the temper, the state of the mind at the time, that gives to temptation its access to the heart and its control of the will. Hence the petition, "Lead us not into temptation." Now when is it that temporal things, and even the trifles of sin, assume an undue value and importance in the estimate of the soul? When that soul is at a distance from God! Just in proportion as it is removed afar from the Infinite Fountain will the petty streams of earth appear more broad and deep. Just in proportion as the light of God's face fades in the distance, will a false colouring be thrown over every terrestrial interest, and all the seducing objects of sense and sin be seen through a distorted medium and in a fictitious magnitude. The heart being empty, deserted by the presence of God, it is, of course, ready to welcome inferior objects to fill the craving void. This is the grand secret of temptation's power! But when God draws nigh to the soul, over-awing it with a sweetly oppressive sense of His majesty-filling it with the light of his glorious presence-firing it with the glow of his redeeming love-arraying before its purified and piercing vision eternal realities in something of their native magnitude and grandeur-dilating it with infinite aspirations, and anchoring it to his throne by the hope of glory, what can temptation do with the soul then? All the allurements of earth and hell will lose their charm, and be robbed of their power to insnare. Temptation cannot even approach the soul. The

holy fires of God's presence will repel the foul spirit by their glitter as the blaze kindled by night in the wilderness keeps in abeyance the beasts of prey. The presence of God is the soul's impregnable bulwark against all the assaults of sin and hell. It is not an exertion of God's physical omnipotence that keeps the soul from temptation—it is the moral power of his presence, pervading the soul with exalted views of his perfections—filling its capacities of thought and feeling with eternal realities, and ministering to it the transcendent joys of salvation. Equally powerful is the presence of God in neutralizing the influence of all those causes that combine to hinder the Christian's progress in holiness. These causes are, mainly, a love of the world, spiritual sloth, and the obstacles which the influence of the ungodly throw in our way. Now the power of all these hinderances to holiness is precisely proportioned to the distance of the soul from God. When He is concealed from the eve of the soul, the world. of course, has a fictitious importance, and puts on new and unreal charms. When the stimulus of the light and love of God's presence is removed from the soul, its spiritual powers necessarily become inactive and torpid. And when the holy fear of God, a present God, is taken away from before the soul, then the influence of the persuasions and enticements of sinners, and of their threats, and scoffs, and cruel mockings, is much more keenly felt. These then prove powerful clogs to the Christian's advancement in the divine life. But when God draws nigh to the soul, the brightness of his presence completely eclipses the false glare of the world, and its fashion

is seen to be passing away, and its mightiest interests to be but the trifles of a moment compared with the objects brought to view in the light of God's face. By his visit the drowsy powers of the soul are startled from their slumbers as the traveller that has overslept himself, by the glare of the risen sunbeams on his morning pillow. There is an energy in the presence of God that wakes up every power of the soul to intense activity. And while God is nigh, how can the influence of the ungodly reach that soul and obstruct its onward course? Their persuasions, their allurements, their threats, their taunts and jeers are unfelt and unfeared by the Christian, while he triumphantly exclaims, "Because God is at my right hand, I shall not be greatly moved." "Greater is he that is with me than all they that are against me." What a blessed result of God's drawing nigh to the soul! Temptation is disarmed and despoiled of its power, and all the obstacles to advancement in holiness removed. The highway to heaven cleared and lighted up with the splendours of God's presence!!

III. Another advantage of God's drawing nigh to the soul is that it will promote the soul's sanctification directly, by giving to all the means of grace

their peculiar and appropriate power.

God's presence has not only a negative influence in removing obstacles to the soul's advancement in the divine life, but a direct and positive influence in promoting its sanctification. The means of graceall the elements of spiritual vitality and growthare only powerless when severed from the vivifying influence of Jehovah's presence. It is his presence that constitutes the vital warmth, the all-penetrating,

all-pervading energy of divine ordinances. Blot out vonder sun from the heavens, and sweep moon and stars from the canopy, and suppose you had the alternations of the seasons, the early and latter rains, the dews of summer and the natural heat in the earth. vet vegetable and animal life would languish and become extinct. Thus, let God cover himself "with a cloud, so that our prayer cannot pass through," and all the means of grace will fail to sustain spiritual life. But let God draw nigh to the soul-let that soul read his word in the light of his presence-let it pray beneath his unveiled face-let it go to the sanctuary, and there behold the power and the glory of a present God-let it pour its praises into his ear -unbosom its wants directly at his feet in prayerhear the gospel under his piercing eye, commune at the Lord's table with a verily present God, enjoy all the means of grace in him, or rather enjoy his immediate, unclouded presence in all the means of grace, and who can prescribe limits to that soul's advancement in the divine life? All the ordinances of God, then, have their legitimate influence. There is no element, no energy, wanting; -the light, and vital warmth, are there—the moral sunshine, and dew, and rain, are blended in their true proportions, and every plant that "the Father hath planted," grows and expands, buds and blooms in spiritual beauty, and ripens those fruits unto holiness, whose end is everlasting life. God's presence can give to the most ordinary ministrations a surpassing power to promote the Christian's growth in grace. His presence is the great and resistless attraction to the soul along the

way of life. It follows in the resplendent wake of his glory, "hard after God," gazing on his face till it is "changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." And I might add here in passing, as an additional advantage of God's drawing nigh to a people, that it gives the means of grace a peculiar power over the minds of sinners. God's ordinances are powerless to the impenitent, only while his presence is withheld from the church. Sinners can only remain at ease and unmoved, while the vital energy of the Divine presence leaves the means of grace as hollow formsas the body without the spirit,-dead. But when a church begins really to feel that God is nigh to every one of them—when they are roused to activity by his presence, and begin to "endure as seeing him who is invisible "-when, under the visions of his face, they begin to reflect the light they thus receive, and display all the appropriate evidences of their own spiritual life and growth, then the means of grace begin to reach the conscience and the heart of the impenitent, with a new and unwonted power. Blind, reckless, and hardened as sinners are, they are not wholly insensible to God's presence in the church. Amidst all their stupidity, sinners feel, at such a time, that there is something in the songs of praise—something in the Christian's prayers-something in the Sabbath's ministrations from the pulpit different from what they are at other seasons. There is an undefinable influence on them which they do not feel when God is afar off. Some rays of his glory penetrate their darkness, and pain the diseased eye of their souls! The tokens of his presence make them afraid. Conviction fastens on them, and they are led by the Spirit to penitence and submission to God. The gospel then will become the power of God unto salvation to the ungodly, just as soon as the glorious Jehovah draws nigh to his people who have drawn nigh to him!

IV. The last advantage of God's drawing nigh to us which I shall now mention, is, that it will prepare us for the afflictions and trials of life, and for the hour of death. Sorrows, afflictions, trials, bereavements, and death itself make a fixed and permanent part of the economy under which we are at present placed. The hope of exemption from these, the best man on earth cannot rationally entertain. True, God in mercy has connected with our present sorrows and afflictions, the mitigating influence of the lapse of time and the balm of friendship and sympathy. The same economy that dooms us to those trials provides for them some temporary alleviations. But, after all, how many of earth's sorrows have no adequate solace? - how many of its trials have no counterbalancing support? How many of our pangs lie beyond the reach of the kindest assiduities of earthly affection, and are immitigable by the most potent balm of human sympathy? How often is there a state of mind from which, if you exclude the light and comfort of God's presence, the soul will feel a solitude more dreadful than the pilgrim abandoned to die alone on the sands of the desert. most gloomy and fearful conception that we ever form of human suffering is to invest it with complete loneliness. I recollect the case of an intelligent lady, of acute sensibility, and capable of appreciating

sympathy and affection from others, who was left at her home in the city of New York, during the prevalence of the Asiatic cholera, for a single day only, with none but a hired girl. That day the fatal plague seized the lady, and "the hireling fled because she was a hireling," and left the lady entirely alone. In the profound silence and solitude of that house she struggled alone with the gigantic destroyer!-no footsteps greeted her ear-no hand wiped the cold sweat from her brow-no eye glanced even a hasty look of pity-nor did any but her God know when her spirit forsook its clay! I have never forgotten the impression which that tragic incident made on my mind. And yet, this but faintly indicates the condition of a soul passing through the complicated trials of life, and at last through the valley and shadow of death without the presence of its God! Give a man all the firmness that philosophy can inspire, all the friendship and sympathy that earth can bestow, I care not, if God desert him he is not prepared to meet the inevitable afflictions of life, nor the troubles and terrors of the dying hour. But let God draw nigh-let his presence be felt, then when sorrow shades the soul its light is not extinguished; the soul then understands the consistency, the divine philosophy of that declaration, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace." Let affliction press sorely upon the soul, then a present God places beneath and round about it the everlasting arms, and makes all its bed in its sickness. Let trials of any or of every kind thicken on the way, and be piled mountain high-the mountain shall flow down before a present God, and become a plain

over which the soul shall pass at once to Him as its refuge from the angry storm. Let bereavement present all its blighted hopes and bleeding hearts, a present God replaces those perished hopes by one which contemplates a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, as wrought out for the soul by these light and momentary afflictions, and his own kind hand stanches the blood, applies a celestial balm, and binds up the broken heart. Let the hour of death approach with its last look on this gladsome, sunny world-its long farewell to all terrestrial scenes -its disruption of the fondest ties of kindred and affection—its sad and final parting with the dear ones that have blended with our very being here-its fears and unknown pangs-its drowning depressions and its undefinable solitude and darkness, and what says the soul to whom God is nigh-"I will fear no evil, for THOU art with me: thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me!!" The presence of God can do for us all this, more than all this, amidst the trials and turmoils of life, the recoilings and dismay of death. There is a soul-sustaining power in the presence of God, for which there is no substitute in the universe. That immortal courage which has conquered all the gigantic ills of life in the history of the world, has been inspired by God's presence. The faith that has "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, quenched the violence of fire, stopped the mouths of lions, out of weakness became strong, waxing valiant in fight and putting to flight the armies of the aliens," has been a faith nurtured in the presence of God. The eternal hope that has shed its unclouded light on the gloom of the apostacy—that has triumphed

over the darkness of death and lit the way to an endless heaven, has gathered all *its* brightness from the beams of Jehovah's face. Let God be nigh, and the omnipotence of his felt presence will achieve for the soul over sin, death and hell, with all their allies, a victory whose song and shouts will rise on the air of eternity.

Christians may learn from this subject, the best method of promoting a true revival of religion in the church. The means or measures for promoting revivals have been a fruitful topic of discussion, and even of angry controversy, in past years. Confidence in God and a profound reverence for his word might have saved the church much vain disputings, and prevented the introduction of measures of doubtful propriety or of positive injury. All means or measures that do not recognise and depend on a PRESENT God as the grand, central, effective power, on which the entire efficiency and success of every other instrumentality is suspended, must prove injurious. Such measures can only beget a false confidence, and their legitimate tendency is to produce spurious conversions. If the presence of God with his people will not revive their graces, and awaken and convert sinners, it is certain, that apart from this, even divinely appointed means will not do it. The method, then, of promoting pure and genuine revivals of religion is very simple. The text imbodies the whole philosophy of the case in its short but significant announcement-" Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you!" Christian brethren, if you substitute any number of ceremonies, or the strictest attendance on outward ordinances, in the

place of that deep, earnest, spiritual exercise of the soul, indicated by the terms-"Draw nigh to God," you may succeed in producing excitement, but you will not be favoured with the beams and blessed visions of God's face present to your own souls, nor shining into the darkness of the sinner's heart, and startling him with a view of his ruined and guilty condition. Until you comply with the requirement of duty in the text, it is both vain and wicked to expect that God will draw nigh to you and grant you a season of refreshing from his presence! Whenever you think you desire and long for a revival of religion in the church, ask yourselves whether you have begun in solemn earnest to address yourselves directly to the work of drawing nigh to God, your confidence being placed on his returning presence and unseen energies for success, rather than on any array of means and measures, however imposing. Are you willing, at the expense of any sacrifice or self-denial, to remove out of the way every thing that might by possibility stand between you and your God? Are you willing to humble yourselves under his mighty hand and submit yourselves unto God? Are you willing, by deep repentance—by the most diligent self-examination-by the most careful perusal of the Bible—the most devout meditation the most importunate, persevering prayer, to draw nigh to God without any farther delay, reserve or looking back? Are you willing, eager, determined to commence this work immediately, with the hope that God will soon draw nigh to you as a church, and give a divine efficiency to the means of grace, both in your own edification and in the awakening and conversion of sinners? Christian brethren, if you have carefully counted the cost, and deliberately in the fear of God, and in humble reliance on his grace and strength, made up your minds irreversibly now to draw nigh to Him, then you may lift up your eyes and behold the dawn of a day of spiritual joy to you, however long and dark may have been your night of weeping. There is light breaking on your horizon. "It is the Spirit's rising beam,"—the first rays of the returning presence of God, and you may exultingly exclaim—"Hail, holy light," and devoutly pray—"Cause thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved."

SERMON III.

THE DESIGN OF CHRIST IN THE CONVERSION OF A SOUL.

"But I follow after, if that l may apprehend that for which, also, I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."—Philip. iii. 12.

FEW passages of the New Testament convey less meaning to an ordinary reader, than the one now selected and announced as the text. But this results rather from the want of patient thought, and of contemplating the passage in its connexions, than from any intrinsic obscurity in the text itself. True, the phraseology is somewhat peculiar, the words "apprehend," and "apprehended," being used in a different sense in the same sentence; yet the meaning of the apostle in this remarkable declaration, is neither obscure nor doubtful. He states in the preceding verses, that he had renounced every thing for Christ. He had foregone the preferments and honours, the gain and the glory which would have been the rewards of his continued attachment to the Jewish religion. And his own testimony respecting these things once so alluring to his youthful ambition, is very remarkable. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ

Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him: not having my own righteousness, which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead!"

From these declarations, it appears that Paul had given up the great end, yea, had renounced every thing for which he once lived, and had now a new object before him, to which he cheerfully sacrificed all others. To know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the deadif by any means he might fulfil the duties, and secure the destinies of a redeemed soul. This object, he informs us, he has not already attained perfectly. Then, in the words of the text, he discloses to us the purpose and efforts of his life, in reference to this great end before him. "But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which, also, I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." The plain meaning of the apostle's language here seems to be this, that it was his constant aim to know and attain the great ends for which the Lord Jesus Christ converted him.

That I may apprehend THAT for which, also, I am apprehended of Christ Jesus; that is, that I may understand—lay hold of—attain those objects which the Lord Jesus had in view when he apprehended me in

my mad career of persecution, and bestowed on me his regenerating grace—that I may fulfil his benevolent designs in making me a Christian. This does not refer to Christ's special design in calling Paul to be the great apostle of the gentiles—but to those designs which he has in the conversion of any soul. This is manifest from the fact, that in a subsequent verse, the apostle exhorts all Christians to be "thus minded"—that is, to take the same views of this subject, and pursue the same course that he did.

The object of the following discourse shall be to inquire what the designs of Christ are in the conversion of a soul—what is THAT for which Christ apprehends it in its sins, and regenerates it, and after which that soul should follow.

I. I remark, in the first place, that it is not the only design of Christ in converting a soul, merely to take it to heaven. We know, indeed, that too many professors of religion assume it as granted, that this is Christ's main and only design in their regeneration, and hence they appear to be chiefly anxious to have just as much piety as will ultimately take them to heaven. Their inquiries and self-examination relate to the simple fact, whether they have any well-founded hope, that they shall be safe and happy AT LAST! But if it be Christ's main and only design in the conversion of a soul, merely to take it to heaven, then there are many unaccountable things, both in the plan of redemption and in the actual history of the righteous, in the present world. On this supposition, it is not easy to account for the fact that the great majority of those who are converted, are made the subjects of renewing grace while young! If the main and only design be

merely to take them to heaven, why not convert the inmates of the alms-houses and lazarrettos? why not apprehend the old and infirm? why not take all those tottering on the verge of the eternal world, and crushed beneath the weight and woes of years, and make this the general rule of conversion, while the young shall form the mere exception? On the assumption now under consideration, this would appear to be the most benevolent plan. We cannot see, on this supposition, why God should so often choose heads of families, as the subjects of his regenerating grace. This fact in itself would seem to indicate that he designed them to exert a holy influence in the various domestic relations. Nor can we see why there should be so abundant armour, both of defence and of conquest, furnished the Christian, if the great aim be merely to take him to heaven. very organization of the church—the plan by which it is perpetuated—the laws and agencies by which it is extended, would all seem to indicate that in the conversion of a soul. God had other and greater purposes to subserve besides that of merely taking it to heaven. And if this were his only design, then why delay to receive the Christian at once to the home of the blest? Why keep him so long on his pilgrimage?--why leave him in this atmosphere of clouds and storms—leave him to wander and to weep in this land of sorrow? Why subject him for a course of years to the exhaustion and agony of "wrestling with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places?"

Why hold him in connexion with the fallen race

amidst the jarring and repulsive elements of their depravity, often buffeted and bleeding under the scourge of their tongues and the fangs of their malignity and revenge? All this is utterly inexplicable if Christ's great design in converting a soul be merely to receive it to himself in heaven! Why not give it the wings of a dove that it may escape from the storms of earth, and fly away at once and be at rest in the bosom of its God?

II. It may be remarked, in the second place, that one design of the Lord Jesus in converting a soul is that he may enstamp upon it his own divine image. The sacred scriptures inform us that "whom God did foreknow, them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." The Saviour, then, in executing his work of redemption, must make it a primary design to fulfil this divine decree of predestination. He and the Father are one in those eternal counsels which relate to the soul's salvation.

Christ declares this to be one of his designs in renewing the hearts of men. "I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." By this it would be manifest both to themselves and to others that they were conformed to his image, "renewed in knowledge and true holiness after the image of Him that created them." "Chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Then, my dear fellow Christian, that for which you were apprehended of Christ Jesus is that he might draw his own divine likeness on your soul. In your conversion he designs primarily to make you personally holy. It is his aim to trace his own

lineaments on your soul in such prominence and relief that you shall be his witness in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. He intends to make you so much like himself that you shall be his representative to the world! Have you not been struck with the remarkable coincidence of the language which Christ uses respecting himself and his disciples in their relations to the world? In one passage he declares, "I am the light of the world," in another, in equally unqualified terms he affirms, "YE are the light of the world." As the great Sun of Righteousness, it is his design in arising on you, to shine upon your soul till it is "made light in the Lord." For this great result the Saviour apprehended you. And this will explain the meaning of those rich provisions for your sanctification which form so striking a feature in the economy of redemp-The word of God, all manner of prayer and supplications in the Spirit, the ordinances of his house, the office of the ministry, fastings and watchings, the whole administration of Providence with its alternations of goodness and severity, mercies and judgments, and, superadded to all these, the energies of the Holy Ghost to give them efficacy. These are the means by which the Lord Jesus designs to bring you to "follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "Be ve holy as your Father who is in heaven is holy." Now, my hearers, light and heat and moisture and earth do not more clearly indicate that God, in the material creation, designed our world to teem with vegetable life, than do these means of grace evince that Christ in the conversion of a soul designs its personal holiness. By these means he intends that every soul which he converts shall grow up unto the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. His aim is nothing less than this in its very conversion. He would have that soul "a spectacle to the world and to men and to angels" in the splendours of that holiness to which it is recovered by his redeeming grace. He would have it stand out in its generation as the greater light to rule the day, and to be transferred when it sets here to shine hereafter in the firmament of God for ever. Christian, ask yourself, as under the eye of Jehovah, whether you are following after, if that you may apprehend this, for which also you have been apprehended of Christ Jesus.

III. Another design of Christ in the conversion of a soul is to have it derive its happiness from the same source from which he derives his.

In nothing perhaps has the apostacy more deeply influenced the human mind than in its estimate of the source and the means of its real happiness. endlessly diversified and contradictory pursuits of men all having professedly the same end in view, is sufficient proof that the soul is labouring under a fearful subversion of those original principles which would have led it infallibly to its highest happiness. The mistakes of our fallen nature on this great subject may be ranged under the two following heads: 1st. That the world in some form or other, in its riches or honours, in its pursuits and pleasures, in the adaptation of its objects to gratify the sensitive part of our nature, can afford satisfactory and permanent enjoyment to the immortal mind, and 2dly, when the soul, taught by the bitter experience of all its blighted

hopes and prospects that the world in no form can make it happy, thinks that religion itself only holds out the promise of being happy beyond the grave in a future state. Perhaps there is no view of fallen man which more excites the Saviour's compassion than to see that strong desire after happiness with which he was originally created utterly perverted, and yet acting with all its imperishable strength like the might of the madman hurrying him from scene to scene, from one expedient to another, pursuing shadows and grasping at baubles, disappointed, torn, bleeding, faint, yet urging onward after some new phantoms as old ones vanish, till life itself worn out in the chase, closes at last in eternal sorrow and despair.

Now when Christ converts a soul it is his design to correct its mistakes both as to the objects, the means, and the pursuit of its highest happiness. He would have that soul derive its happiness from the same great source from which he derives his. He would have it forsake the world in its brightest and best forms, as wholly incompetent to furnish the elevated enjoyment, or satisfy the infinite aspirations of an immortal mind. He designs that it should leave the little things of earth to earthly minds—that it should estimate the trifles of the world according to their intrinsic levity, and bear its testimony to their hollow and unsatisfactory nature as the means of man's highest happiness. Nay, that all the kingdoms of this world, with all their glory, are a price far too small to purchase from that soul one act of servile devotion. He has apprehended that soul in its vain wanderings after enjoyment, that it might

rise at once to the great fountain from which his pure human nature drank full draughts of bliss while here on earth, and drinks them still in heaven. He would have the soul that he converts to seek its supreme happiness in God alone, the fountain of infinite and eternal felicity-in holy communion with the mind of Jehovah-in adoring contemplations of the glorious attributes of the divine nature, in exalted views of the extent, number, and grandeur of his works throughout immensity, -in studying the wonders of providence over our world—in ever-expanding, ever-thrilling thoughts on the mysteries and magnificence, the developments and stupendous glories of the plan of human redemption, -in the exercise of that supreme and engrossing love to God, which his perfections thus beheld, will awaken, in the prayer that holds sweet converse with the Eternal-in the faith that verily believes his holy truths-in the immortal hope that anchors on him as its object-in the gratitude that rises as volumes of incense to his throne, and in the incessant play of those benevolent affections which are excited towards all the rational creation. In all these Christ would have the regenerated soul to find its highest happiness. These were the great sources from which the Son of God, in his human nature, derived his holy joys. Christian, heapprehended you that you might be made happy by the very same objects. Are they not abundantly sufficient to bless you without borrowing aught from the littleness and meanness of earthly things? Is not this an ample, a capacious fountain? It is wide and deep as the being and perfections of God. Christ designs, by your conversion, that you should come at once to

this fountain and drink—that you should enter immediately into this joy of your Lord. Why should you fall into the mistake, that you must get to heaven before you are happy? Come now to the source that made Christ rejoice in spirit when here on earth—that made Paul and Silas, amidst stocks and stripes, break the midnight silence of the "inner prison" with their song of gladness, and caused them to be exceeding joyful in all their tribulations. Here are resources and elements to make you happy, wholly irrespective of place, to make you happy in any world of the universe, on the most distant point of God's creation, or at any period in the progressions of eternity.

IV. A fourth design of Christ in converting a soul, is that with all its active powers it may pursue the same ends which he pursues, and be actuated by the same motives that influenced him. The world, even as it "lies in wickedness," presents some stupendous achievements of the active powers of man. The sway which he has acquired over the great agencies of matter, taming the very lightning, and turning the most terrific and destructive elements to the purpose of his convenience and comfort—the monuments of art which he has reared, and the mastery he has gained over the great laws of nature, all these show, that though in ruins, man is a mighty being still, possessing energies that are capable of being directed to nobler objects than the discoveries of science or the triumphs of arts and of arms! But nothing is more characteristic of our fallen condition than the misdirection and manifest perversion of man's activities. That the energies of the soul are biassed and diverted

from the great object for which they were originally destined, we have melancholy proof in the revelry and dissipation, the avarice and mad ambition, and all the overgrown schemes of wickedness that have cursed our globe. Now it would be strange if Christianity did not provide a suitable remedy for this evil. It would be strange indeed if in the conversion of a soul Christ should have no design to direct its immortal activities to an end worthy their strength and executive capabilities. When he apprehends a soul that is wasting its energies on plans of sin, it is his design to bring all the powers of that soul to act rightly-to pursue the same great end which he pursues. And, my dear hearers, Christ had and has still a definite end before him, which regulates all the mighty acts of his mediatorship. His mediatorial office is not a mere sinecure. He does not sustain this office without a plan of sufficient amplitude and grandeur to engross his infinite energies in its execution. The great end which he is pursuing is to manifest the glory of God to the universe by saving this lost world. This brought him from heaven to the manger of Bethlehem for his incarnation, and thence through a life of unparalleled sorrows to Calvary for his crucifixion. When entering on the last of his mortal conflicts, he could say with emphasis, "I have manifested thy glory, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." In this great work he laboured with a benevolence that never tired—he pursued this end with a purpose that never blenched. He has risen, and reigns in heaven now, pursuing this object in all the wide range of his mediatorial government. His heart

still glows with zeal for the glory of God, and yearns in infinite solicitude for the salvation of the world He has established a kingdom here on earth, with vast resources, arrangements, and agencies, all bearing on the grand result, to manifest the glory of the Eternal Father and to save our sinking globe. He is pursuing this end with an infinite intensity of desire for its accomplishment, amidst the civil, social, and political changes and revolutions of earth. And he will pursue it till the arrival of that august era in the grand cycle of ages, when he shall have put all enemies under his feet, and shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father, that the infinite God may be all in all! Now, Christian, when he apprehended your soul in the gracious work of your conversion, one design which he had in doing so, was to bring you in all your renovated activities to enter on the very same pursuit. He would have the immortal energies of your mind rise at once to an aim sufficiently lofty for God. He would have all your powers restored to an employment like this, worthy the dignity of your recovered nature. He would have you enjoy the honour of standing side by side with your Redeemer in that exalted sphere, where infinite benevolence is at work, reflecting glory on God and bestowing salvation on man. He would have your whole soul in harmony-your whole heart in sympathy with his, while as a co-worker with him you task your utmost energies in pursuing the same high end under the omnipotence of the same holy motives which influenced him! O! Christian, have you sufficiently pondered the thought that it was for this that you were apprehended of Christ Jesus?

V. LASTLY. It is the design of Christ in converting a soul to have it participate in his own glory and blessedness in eternity. The truth of this position the Saviour himself has sufficiently attested in the following declarations: "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." "To him that overcometh, I will grant to sit down with me on my throne, even as I overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne." The Saviour, in its conversion, designs this as the final destination of the soul. But it is not an arbitrary destination, it is the natural consequence of the soul's conformity to the image of Christ, and of its pursuit of the same great end with him. It is the result of that great law of moral congeniality which acts on the holy universe, binding them to God as the attraction of gravitation binds the material worlds of each system to a common centre. In the great scheme of creation every creature finds its own place, its common level, -finds an allotment suited to its nature and habits. So strictly has God preserved this order, that amidst all the changes to which created things are subject it has never been broken. Since the creation the eagle has never been found dwelling by choice in the depths of ocean, nor leviathan sporting on the land or in the air. Now the same great analogy pervades the "new creation" which Christ performs on the souls of men. In this there is an order as well defined and unvariable—an order which Christ himself

declares shall never be broken. All the harmonies and adaptations of this system of the new creation are tending to the sublime result of bringing the renewed soul to a participation in the glory and blessedness of its Redeemer in eternity. Why has he drawn on that soul his own divine image? Why taught it to derive its happiness from the same exalted source from which He draws his own? Why led it with all its regenerated energies to pursue the same noble end which he pursues, and to feel the controlling sway of the holy motives which influence him? Evidently that that soul at last may be with him where he is to behold his glory. The wings of the eagle and the structure of his eye, do not more certainly fit him to mount in the air and gaze on the sun, than do these things fit the Christian to participate in the joy and behold the glory of its redeeming Lord in eternity. There is a congeniality in such a soul that seeks fellowship and an eternal home with the Lord Jesus. It has the very elements of an everlasting ascent in the scale of being, a holy aptitude to become a partner in the glories of Christ's mediatorial throne in heaven, a participant in the joys of its Lord through eternity. And in its conversion Jesus designs that this should actually be the soul's ultimate destination. Were not its glories so overmatching to the grasp of human thought, we might here attempt to follow the renewed soul in its flight to that destiny, and to gaze on its coronation and illustrious enthronement with Christ in heaven. But on such a sight mortal eyes cannot look steadfastly "by reason of the glory that excelleth!" Christian, when Christ by his grace apprehended you,

grovelling in the dust and making your way to hell, it was his design ultimately to clothe your soul in the splendours of his own glory on the throne in heaven, to fill it with the fulness of his own joy through eternity.

What that will be is reserved to be made known to us by the amazing disclosures of our future and immortal existence. All that we can say respecting it now is to sum up the struggling conceptions of our minds and the laborious emotions of our hearts in the inspired exclamation, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

We see from this subject, in the first place, that the great object which Christianity contemplates in the case of believers is but partially conceived of and little understood.

When a man is converted, the relation of that event to the future destiny of his soul in heaven is almost the only relation that strikes the mind. The idea that he is to be safe at last, or that he is to escape hell, is the principal predominating idea which his conversion suggests. What a contracted miserable view of the great end of Christianity in recovering the human soul from the ruins of the apostacy. It is high time that the church should be disabused of such a view. She certainly must and will be before her millennium can come. It is high time that Christians should be solicitous, very solicitous about something else than merely finding an admission into paradise after death. This is not all for which they have been apprehended of Christ Jesus. It is time

that they should feel a deep anxiety to fulfil all the designs of Christ in their conversion. My Christian friends, why are you not as anxious to ascertain whether Christ is formed in your hearts and living there, whether his blessed image is drawn on you in its proportions and celestial beauty, as you are to know whether you shall at last be admitted into heaven? It was as much his design in converting you to make you "holy and unblameable before him in love," to make you so much like himself that he could call you "the light of the world," to make you a polished reflector of his own infinite purity upon the eyes of your fellow men, as it was to take you at last to himself in heaven?

Why are you not as anxious now to renounce the pleasures of the world, and seek your happiness from the same exalted source with Christ, as you are to have the joys of heaven after death? In your conversion, the Lord Jesus designed as much that you should guit the polluted streams of earth, and come directly to this great fountain, as he did that you should at last drink of those rivers of pleasure and partake of that fulness of joy, which are at his right hand for evermore! He designs that you shall begin your heaven here, and rely on the same sources for happiness now, that will confer it on you millions of ages hence, in eternity! And why are you not just as anxious to pursue, with untiring zeal, and with the concentrated activities of your whole being, the same high ends which he pursues, and with the same holy motives, as you are to be amongst the number of the saved at the day of judgment? In your conversion, he as certainly designed that you should bring forth

much fruit, that your life should exhibit an undeviating career of incessant efforts to glorify God and bless the world, as he designs to reward such labours of love at last, by a participation with him in the glories and the bliss of his throne, in heaven. Awake, then, my Christian friends, awake to all these ends as equally contemplated by Christ in your conversion. These were the objects at which Paul aimed in his whole life, after which he panted with unutterable desire as he forgot the things that were behind, and reached forth to those that were before, and pressed towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. These are the legitimate ends of your pursuit, arising out of the very designs of Christ in your conversion! And by all the tender obligations which his redeeming love has imposed on you, I beseech you follow after, if that you may apprehend all these for which also you have been apprehended of Christ Jesus.

We see from this subject, in the second place, what an unfounded prejudice that is, which supposes that religion RESERVES all its happiness for a future state, and that, too, to be purchased at the sacrifice of all present enjoyment! It is one great design of Christianity, to recover the soul from its perverted tastes and affections,—its erroneous views and mad pursuits of guilty pleasures, is the cause of its present want of appropriate happiness. The religion of Jesus Christ is full of benevolence—a benevolence that will not overlook the present enjoyment of the mind. Like a pitying angel, it weeps over the ruined soul in its fruitless hurry to be happy, by pursuits and aims which in their very nature must ultimately only

plunge that soul more deeply in spiritual sorrows! And with an angel's speed, on wings of love it flies to the lost sinner, warns and entreats, reasons and remonstrates, invites and woos him to make his escape from the labyrinth of thorns, and come at once, immediately, on that ground, where sovereign mercy will apply celestial balm to his lacerations, where eternal love will unseal to him that great fountain, from which a holy creation, with Christ at their head, have derived their full supplies of happiness! "We who believe, do enter into rest," is the testimony of all those who cordially embrace the gospel. And this is what Christ designs in converting you! He designs that your troubled heart shall have peace and be still-that in your hitherto agitated bosom, there shall be "a great calm." Sinner, do you do well to have a prejudice against the gospel, and to reject it on the ground that it will make you unhappy in the present life? For the sake of your own consistency, abandon this at once, and if you must be the dupe of the Devil's deception, let it be for some other and more plausible reason than that the religion of Jesus Christ will render you unhappy in the present world. That religion to which you instinctively fly in the hour of your most tragic peril and calamity-that religion which you believe has resources to sustain your spirit amidst the giant pangs and throes of dissolution, to pour on the shadows of death, a celestial lustre, and light up the sunset of the tomb with the glories of an immortality beyond—that religion make you unhappy in the present life! O! can the Great Adversary desire a better subject for his burning, Satanic scorn, than to see a youth under the sway of a prejudice so infinitely absurd!

FINALLY. We see from this subject what a glorious prospect lies before the Christian in a future world! In his conversion it is the design of Christ that the Christian should ultimately attain that eternal peace and purity after which he now pants! Yes, Christian friend, it is not merely for a scene of conflict and of incessant labour in the feebleness of flesh and blood. that you are apprehended of Christ Jesus. You are destined to a triumph, whose grandeur shall correspond with the greatness of those spiritual struggles by which it is to be won! There is a crown of joy and a throne of glory awaiting you, that shall amply compensate for the sorrows and the ignominy of your mortal condition. You shall not always be a mourning pilgrim in a strange land. There is a home in your Father's house on high-a mansion fitted and ready for the reception of your redeemed spirit. Jesus has gone to prepare it for you. Lift up your heads, ye ransomed of the Lord, and sing, "for your redemption draweth nigh."

> Far, far above yon azure sky, Heaven's starry crowns and sun-lit throne Point to your glorious destiny, And beckon to your endless home.

From clouds and darkness look away, Nor earthly sorrows feel nor fear, Ye soon shall be beyond their sway, Where God shall wipe life's latest tear.

SERMON IV.

THE SOURCE AND SECURITY OF THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE.

"Because I live, ye shall live also."-John xiv. 19.

CONNECTED with the principle of life, there is a mystery which the human mind hitherto has never been able to penetrate. Many of the phenomena of this principle have been investigated, but the nature of the principle itself still remains unknown. Hence the existence of any being considered absolutely and apart, could not, independent of experience or observation, furnish evidence of the existence of any other being. I know that it has been argued that the existence of God, considered in itself alone, would furnish presumptive evidence that he would bring into being and sustain other existences. But this argument is grounded on the knowledge which revelation gives us of the attributes of God rather than on the conclusions which reason might draw respecting the mere existence of the Deity. Certainly the simple fact of the existence of one being cannot be seen to have any natural connexion with the continued existence of another. To us the assertion of our blessed Lord in the text taken abstractly would

seem a dark saying—"Because I live, ye shall live also."

This declaration was made, too, just previously to his death, when sorrow had filled the hearts of his disciples in prospect of that event. It is evident, then, that Christ intended it as the language of consolation to his followers. In the preceding verse he remarks, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me," and to increase their confidence and hope he adds-"Because I live, ye shall live also." It is obvious that his own existence, to which the Redeemer here refers, was not simply his mortal life, for that was just about to end. Nor was the existence of his people, which the text contemplates, merely their temporal being, for that in the course of human events must also terminate. In reference to himself, he here speaks of his divine existence in connexion with the human as Mediator;in respect to his disciples, he speaks of that spiritual life of their souls, which distinguishes them from a world "dead in trespasses and in sins." It will be the object of this discourse, then, to show that from the nature of Christ's existence and its relations, as the Son of God and Mediator, there is the highest ground of certainty that the spiritual life of his disciples will be sustained for ever.

I. To confirm this position, let it be remarked, in the first place that such is the nature of Christ's existence as God, that it involves the power of perpetuating itself eternally; and such the nature of his existence as Mediator, that it is itself the fountain from which is communicated the spiritual life of his disciples.

Every unprejudiced reader of the Bible must admit that it ascribes to Jesus Christ an underived, eternal, self-existence. If not, Christ himself is found a false witness, for he declares—"before Abraham was, I AM." The scriptures speak of an "eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus before the world." They speak of "grace given to Christians in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world," The Redeemer himself prays to be glorified with that glory which he had with the Father before the world was. The word of God attributes to him the creation of all things. Now if there be any meaning in this language, it does evidently indicate this much at least, that Christ existed before any part of the created universe. And when we trace his existence back to that remote period, the sacred oracles leave it merged in the being of the eternal, self-existent Jehovah. They give no intimation that Christ has a derived or dependent being. No account of his origin. If the Lord Jesus, in his divine nature, had had a beginning, assuredly that would have been an event of which the universe might expect to know something. But whilst no part of revelation seems to favour such a supposition, there is one declaration of Christ himself which proves the truth of the contrary, and places it beyond reasonable dispute. "I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last; he which was, and is, and is to Let any man examine the structure of the original language, in which this sentence is found, and see whether, if divine wisdom had intended to teach Christ's underived, eternal self-existence, it could have selected more striking or appropriate

terms. If it be a fact then that such is the nature of Christ's existence as God that it is underived, and has been from all eternity, it is evident that it must include the power of perpetuating itself to all eternity. What should interfere with or mar that existence which has been derived from nothing else-which is dependent on nothing else in the universe. With our habits of contemplating the fleeting existences around us, how striking and glorious a contrast to them does the essential being of Jesus Christ present. He lives on, and shall live on for ever in the glories of a self-sustaining power! The revolutions and changes of earth with all its materials of rebellion and enmity to God-the malignant machinations of hell with all its tremendous agencies of evil-the revolt of angels and the subversion of thrones and principalities in heaven, cannot assail the independent, eternal being of the Son of God. The utter annihilation of all creatures and all worlds in the universe would not affect his essential existence. He would still live alone in his glory! O how refreshing to look away from a world of death and perpetual mutation, and contemplate the unchangeable and eternal existence of the Son of God. But this fact alone that Christ, as God, possesses an existence that includes the power of perpetuating itself eternally beyond the possibility of change or end, does not furnish any ground of certainty that his people shall live for ever. But we must connect with this fact the truth that Christ's existence as Mediator is itself the fountain from which is communicated the spiritual life of his disciples. Of this truth the Scriptures leave no room to doubt. The blessed Redeemer declares-"As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by" (or in) "the Father, so he that eateth me"-(believes on and receives Christ) "even he shall live by me. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the bread of life-I am the resurrection and the lifethe way, the truth, and the life." If these declarations have any meaning, they clearly teach us that the existence of Christ, as Mediator, is the great fountain from which is communicated the spiritual life of his people. Now as there is an inseparable union between the existence of Christ as Mediator and his independent existence as God, does not such a fountain of spiritual life to his people furnish a high ground of certainty that that life shall be perpetuated for ever? This fountain is shoreless and bottomless as the infinite abyss of Jehovah's being. What though it be supplying streams to this distant part of the universe, and have continued those streams since the commencement of time? Can it ever become exhausted? Can the suns or the winds of time or eternity dry up this boundless ocean of spiritual life which is in Christ Jesus? Will the revolutions of endless ages ever break up the fountains of this great deep of life in the being of Jesus, and scatter and dissipate its mighty waters? No! after it shall have perfectly flooded this world, it will still be wide and deep and clear as ever. In this view, then,

Christ might well exclaim to his disconsolate disciples—"Because I live, ye shall live also."

II. A second ground of certainty that the Christian shall live eternally is, that the nature of Christ's existence is such that it gives him an absolute CON-TROL over all the elements of spiritual life. We find that in order to the continuance of animal life, something more is necessary than merely to fit up an admirable vital machinery, and communicate the impulse that first puts it in motion. A constant process, both of defending and sustaining it, is absolutely necessary. From its commencement it is surrounded by causes ever tending to its destruction, so that life has been beautifully said to be "a forced state. It has to maintain its existence in direct opposition to every material agent in nature, each of which seems enlisted in avowed hostility against its being." If it continues, then some hand must ward off these destructive forces. In addition to this, there are certain elements of support that must be furnished in nicely adjusted proportions.-Light and heat, food and air, in given quantities, seem indispensable to the continuance of animal life; and these must be administered by some hand that has them completely under its control, and can keep them in their proper combinations and proportions. Without these elements thus administered, the most perfect vital machinery first put in healthful action, will soon cease to operate, and the spark of life become extinct. Hence it is evident that the continuance of animal life is dependent on the constant exertion of no less a power than that of Omnipotence. Now the same analogy holds in regard to the spiritual life of Christians. Here it is equally true that in the continuance of this life of the soul, something more is necessary than merely to communicate it at first even from the glorious fountain of a Saviour's infinite and eternal existence. Numerous moral causes constantly operate within and without the Christian, to destroy this vital principle. It has to contend for its existence with all the malignant agencies of earth and hell, that are leagued in deadly hostility against its being. If it continues, and successfully resists their action, it will be by the interference of some mighty hand that can control these agencies, and neutralize their powers. But in addition to this, there are certain great elements of spiritual life that must be administered with constancy and infinite skill, or the bud of the Christian's eternal life will be blasted and die. The constant light and warmth of God's quickening Spiritthe food and atmosphere of truth in their proper combinations and proportions, seem indispensable to the continuance of spiritual life.

Now such is the very nature of Christ's existence as God and Mediator, that it includes the power of a perfect control over all these elements. As God, he possesses an omniscience that comprehends at a glance all the machinations of earth and hell—all the combining causes that aim at the destruction of his people's spiritual life. He can measure with infinite precision their power, and see all their possible tendencies. And he possesses an omnipotence that can curb the rage and malignity of apostate men and fiends of darkness, and can destroy those fearful agencies of evil that threaten the spiritual being of his people. As Mediator, the government of the

universe is laid upon his shoulders, and he lives to administer it with special reference to the security of the spiritual existence of his people, undisturbed by all the forces that war against it. And what a control must Omniscience and Omnipotence give him over all the elements of spiritual life? The residue of the Spirit is with him, -he is the truth, and the great organ of its communication to the minds of men. In this respect, "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." With what infinite wisdom can he select and combine, and in what exact proportions can be administer these elements of life to the soul!-Look at his existence, and say whether the lapse of time will exhaust "the supply of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Look at the treasury and the nature of his truth, and see whether the mind, even with the advantage of the illuminations of the Holy Ghost, will ever be able in this life so to comprehend all that truth, that it shall begin to famish for want of resources to meet the demands of its growing powers of knowledge? Transfer the mind to a future and endless state of being, and see whether the existence of Christ will not enable him there to create around the mind such an atmosphere, and command such agencies and influences of the eternal Spirit upon it as may be necessary to the perfection of its everlasting life? Can he not there place it under such successive disclosures of truth, as shall fill its dilating powers and form it to the measure of the stature of the spirits of the just made perfect? O what a wondrous meaning shall our text then appear to convey-" Because I live, ye shall live also." Yes, this existence of Christ, which includes the power

of an absolute control over all the causes that militate against, and over all the elements that minister to the continuance of spiritual life, furnishes strong security that his people shall live also for ever.

III. Christ's existence as mediator, has been exhibited to man in a form that gives the highest pledge of continued spiritual life to his people.

The Lord Jesus, as mediator, assumed our nature, and took it into inseparable union with his own divine nature. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory, as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. For verily he took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." And, brethren, perhaps we shall find a depth of meaning in Christ's incarnation, independent of the fact that it qualified him to make the great atonement, of which we have heretofore had no adequate conceptions. There are two great facts of the utmost moment to Christians involved in the assumption of human nature by the Lord Jesus, and its intimate and inseparable union with the divinity. One is, that Christ's human nature possessed a spiritual life of the same character, and begun and continued in the same circumstances of temptation and peril with that of his disciples, and therefore, he has the advantage of a personal experience of every thing pertaining to the dangers and conflicts attending it, and has given us a practical example of the continuance and triumph of this spiritual life in a condition of equal or greater opposition than it will ever be called to encounter in the case of his followers. The other fact is, that Christ's assumption of our nature, shows us what we never

could have learned otherwise -that is, that human nature is capable of being taken into a most intimate and inseparable union with the divine nature, and of existing in a relation to the Godhead that may have an astonishing influence on the eternal life of the soul. Here was a glorious and triumphant experiment exhibited which the world before had never witnessed, and respecting which the loftiest powers of unassisted reason could have drawn no definite conclusion. Whether limited human nature could ever be raised to an indissoluble union with the divine, was a problem which, but for the peculiar form of Christ's existence, as Messiah, must have remained for ever without a satisfactory solution. But what a light does Christ's incarnation throw upon the following declaration of scripture-" That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they may be one in us." What a glorious significancy does the connexion of the Redeemer's human nature with his Godhead give to the intimate and endeared union of his people to himself. Now, it may be asked whether this form of Christ's existence manifesting his personal and experimental fellowship with all the infirmities of our common nature, and with all the struggles and perils of the spiritual life-and whether this grand experiment showing in what a close and indestructible connexion human nature can exist with the divine, does not furnish a high ground of certainty that Christ's people shall live eternally? But there is another fact in this form of Christ's existence, as manifested to man, which goes to complete this certainty. The question still arises, notwithstanding all

that has been said-" What influence will death have on the spiritual life of Christians?" This spiritual existence is commenced and carried forward a given distance in the body,—in connexion with mortal life. The termination of mortal life is a mysterious and awful event. No one of earth's millions has returned from that sad bourn that separates the living from the dead, to give us the results of his experience, and tell us what influence death exerts on the agencies of the soul and its mode of being. Have we any evidence that the spiritual life of the believer shall remain unburt by that convulsion which rends the tabernacle of clay, and lays it in ruin? These are questions in themselves of most terrific interest! But they are all satisfactorily answered in one fact peculiar to that form of Christ's existence as Mediator which he manifested to men-that is, the resurrection of his human nature. He triumphed over death the third day, and brought forth his mortal part from the dark domain of the King of Terrors, reanimated, a glorious form. What an illustrious proof that the springs of spiritual life lie too deep to be affected by that strange work which dissolves the connexion between soul and body! What a convincing testimony, that death in nowise interferes with the eternal life of the soul! Nay! that it cannot even hold in its captivity the dust and ashes that have once been associated with a soul possessing this divine principle. The ruins of the believer's body, "shall be built again, and all that dust shall rise." "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." And so certainly as he has presented in his own risen human nature these first fruits of a general resurrection, so certainly will the time of the great harvest come, when all the bodies of his people of every age, reanimated and reunited to their souls, shall be gathered to Mount Zion above, with the songs and everlasting joys of triumph over death and hell! O, Christian brethren, when we look at a risen Saviour, we begin to feel something of the infinite emphasis of the text—" Because I Live, ye shall live also."

IV. And lastly. The nature and end of Christ's existence in heaven, since his resurrection, gives a strong pledge of the continued spiritual life of his people. the nature and end of Christ's existence in heaven, since his resurrection, we can know nothing, except from revelation. And yet that his existence is of one peculiar character, rather than another, and that it has some definite aim or end, is a conclusion which reason itself might draw. What that peculiar character is, the scriptures abundantly testify. He lives and sits on the throne, at the right hand of God, as the advocate of his people. His existence, as far as it bears relation to this terrestrial scene, is employed in the work of intercession-" seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us." He exists in the specific character of the "great High priest of our profession. And he is a merciful and faithful high priest in things PERTAINING TO GOD." Brethren, there is meaning in this assertion-"IN THINGS PERTAINING TO GOD!" Think of his wonderful qualifications as an intercessor in his existence at the right hand of the Majesty on high! He lives in the council chambers of the eternal Mind. The secrets of Jehovah are with him. He has the most intimate knowledge of the whole

plan and movements of the divine government. He reigns a joint participant with the Father on the throne of heaven. He is there in all his wisdom, and benevolence, and power-his special love and mercy to the lost, with his glorified human nature in the inner court of Jehovah's temple, our advocate with the Father! And he has somewhat also to offer to God in our behalf. He has the merits of an atonement that stands the world's wonder, and that will yet fill the universe with those impressions of the character of God which it exhibits. He knows how to plead his own blood with the Father. He knows its efficacy—its influence on the eternal Mind in the plan of moral government—how it can prevail for grace to abound over all those imperfections and grievous sins of believers, that would otherwise destroy their spiritual life. And with all this he has a fellowfeeling of our infirmities-retains his human nature on the throne, as the great breast-plate upon his divinity, which contains the names of his disciples engraven by the nails and the spear that once wounded him for their transgressions! O believer, look at Jesus Christ in his intercessory existence as your glorious High Priest! What a security is here given that you shall live for ever! Hear him uttering as with the trump of God-"Because I live, ye shall live also." And now to make assurance on this subject doubly sure, let us look a moment at the great END of Christ's existence in heaven as the Mediator. Nothing can be more certain than that the Son of God in his risen human nature as an intercessor at the right hand of the Father, has some grand and ultimate end in view by existing in this relation.

What then is this glorious aim of his being, as Advocate and Mediator? It is to secure the eternal life of his people—that he may present them at last before his Father's throne without spot and blameless, and confirm them in a reverseless and everlasting existence of holiness and bliss. O what a security is this! Think of this end of the existence of Jesus Christ, in his glorified human nature in eternity! He lives there with all the associations of his love and sorrows here below,-with the remembrance of Gethsemane in its gloom and groans, its tears and prayers, and the sweat of its great agony—with the remembrance of Calvary in its midnight of horrors -its bloody crucifixion and its dying strife-with the tender and delightful associations also of leaving the sepulchre of Joseph on the morning of the third day a conqueror over death, hell, and the grave! And now the great end of an existence connected with such wonders of redeeming grace and dying love is to see the travail of his soul—is to secure, beyond the possibility of failure, the eternal life of those whom he died to redeem. Shall he ever he disappointed? Shall the changes of time, and the malice of earth, or the progressions of eternity, and the malignity of hell, ever thwart this great and ultimate aim of his mediatorial existence, pluck his people out of his hand, and terminate their life, which is "hid with Christ in God?" No! never. While he lives, his people must, and will, live also. Come, then, weak and tempted believer, you may throw the fulness of your soul into the triumphant declaration, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor things present, nor

things to come, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus!"

I. If this view of the subject be correct, then we may see that the doctrine of falling from grace, as it is ordinarily termed, is one which is not only without foundation in the scriptures, but one which greatly derogates from the mediatorial glory of the Son of God. According to this doctrine, the existence of Jesus Christ with all his command and control over the moral elements of the universe, furnishes no pledge that his people shall live also. It is a doctrine, then, which invades the very sanctuary of Christ's being, and tramples under its reckless feet the self-existence, omnipotence, omniscience, covenant-keeping faithfulness and immortal intercessions of the great Head of the church. Towards our brethren in Christ who hold this erroneous opinion, we indulge no other feelings than those of the most entire kindness and Christian friendship. Towards the opinion itself, abstractly, we indulge an irreconcilable hostility, and consider it one of the most unscriptural and untenable positions that can be found in a Christian denomination's creed.

II. Let Christians learn from this subject, their infinite obligations of gratitude and love to Christ, and let them be careful not to abuse the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, so clearly taught in our text.

Christian, come, and in the light of Christ's declaration, that "because he lives, you shall live also," look at the height and depth of your obligations to be grateful, and to love him supremely and for ever. Were some benevolent individual to assure you to-day

that at great expense and much personal suffering and sacrifice, he had secured to you in some mysterious way, a life long as that of Methuselah, and happy as that of Enoch, and that you might look forward to seven or eight hundred years of enjoyment without anticipating any of the distressing evils of earth, no thought of dying and of dread uncertainty when that event should occur need to cross your mind, and during all these happy centuries your sight should not grow dim, nor your natural force be abated, you should be able to enjoy life as with all the freshness of youth, what gratitude would fill your heart toward such a benefactor, what love would bind you to his person!

You would be able to feel the nature of the blessing, inasmuch as we all cherish so strong desires to live, and you would think of the friend who had secured you from all fear of death and of interruption of enjoyment for so many centuries, you would think of him with an irrepressible ardour of love. And, dear fellow Christian, have you not had moments when you felt how infinitely more valuable was the life of the soul than that of the body, with all its temporary enjoyments? It is the life of your soul that Jesus Christ has secured with absolute certainty for ever. Yea, he has bound it up in mysterious indissoluble union with his own glorious existence. He has actually formed a connexion between his own unchanging being and your spiritual life, that nothing through eternity shall sever. He has not merely secured to you a few centuries of earthly enjoyment; he has made your immortality with its exceeding weight of glory certain as his own! "Because I live, ye shall live also." Brethren, suppose this sublime fact were revealed to us now for the first time, how would it affect us? Suppose it were to come in the full light of conviction immediately in contact with our darkness and forebodings of eternal death as ruined sinners? Could our feeble frames sustain our minds under the emotions it would thus excite? O what feelings of gratitude to Christ, "who is our life," what a glow of holy love, what captivity and subjection of all our powers to such an infinitely glorious benefactor! Would any sacrifice seem great that he would command or that we could make? Would any self-denial for his sake seem severe? Now the truth that Christ has so secured the eternal life of your souls ought not to lose any of its impressiveness because it may have been long and familiarly known to you. It is still a wonderful, a glorious fact; one on which the redeemed will dwell with rapture in a future world. Its solemn weight ought to press in upon your souls a sense of obligation to the blessed Redeemer whose force would "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Finally,—We see from this subject the point of that scripture which saith, "he that hath not the Son, hath not life. It is a fact of fearful import that the impenitent are wholly severed from the life that is in Christ Jesus. My dear friends of this class, you are capable of being roused to intense thoughtfulness and effort when your temporal life is endangered. Have you ever seriously thought what it was to be destitute of all spiritual life?—to be met in your present pathway with the certain prospect of eternal

death? If you have not the Son of God formed in your heart and living there, you have no life. What a condition for the soul which God has made to be destitute of any interest in the existence of Christ the Mediator! No connexion between your immortal part and his infinite being that secures to you the prospect of living in bliss for ever. Nay, the very fact that he lives and shall live eternally, furnishes a dire certainty that those who reject him and persevere in rebellion, must perish from his presence for ever. His very existence as God, gives him a control over all those elements in the universe by which he will vindicate his injured honour, his insulted love, and his rejected mercy. It is the great decree of Heaven, "He must reign till He shall have put all enemies under His feet." He will live on then to meet you, O sinner, in the great day, in his glorified human nature as the Mediator, to confront you with that body that was bruised for your iniquities, with that soul that was made an offering for your sin, to speak to you of bleeding dying love set at naught, of winning, weeping mercy despised, of pardon and eternal life freely offered, and by you freely rejected. He will live yet to show you the scars of those wounds from which flowed the blood that you have trodden under foot and counted an unholy thing! He will live to break upon your agonized vision in the glories of that eternal Spirit to whom you have done despite in this land of probation. O, how full of awfulness is the truth that Christ is alive and shall live for evermore, and because he lives, the finally incorrigible must die an eternal death in his righteous government.

SERMON V.

THE FOUNDATION OF MORAL COURAGE AND SOME OF THE EXIGENCIES THAT CALL FOR ITS EXERCISE IN THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL.

"As an adamant harder than flint, have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house." — Ez. iii. 9.

In the earlier and ruder ages of the world, feats of physical strength and displays of mere animal prowess were held in high esteem, and much admired. These were the foundation of that superiority and controlling influence, which certain individuals held over their fellows. But advancing intelligence, civilization and refinement have introduced a different taste, and brought into esteem a higher order of power. Divine revelation has been in advance of all other causes, in effecting this result. The model of character which the Bible presents—the deeds to which it urges, and the display of powers which it demands, are far more exalted than those of the gla-

^{*} This sermon was delivered at the opening of the Synod of Pennsylvania, convened in Harrisburg, Pa., Oct. 1843. On the day following its delivery, the Synod, by a unanimous vote, requested a copy of it for publication.—The author, for certain reasons then deemed sufficient, declined at that time a compliance with the request.

diator or the wrestler, the hero of romance, the knight of chivalry, or the modern warrior. The Bible has had no slight agency in rendering the distinction between mind and matter broad and palpable, and in showing the superiority of the former over the latter. Pagan Greece, and Rome, in the palmiest days of their civilization and refinement, seem to have had no just conceptions of what constituted the highest and noblest display of human power. Hence the savage pleasure which they derived from witnessing the conflict of infuriated brutes, the dexterous death-blow of the gladiator, or the mere muscular superiority of the wrestler and the racer. It was reserved for revelation to point out to man a higher and nobler sphere of exertion, to define what KIND of power is destined to have a permanent ascendency in the economy of God, and to teach the human intellect loftier aspirations than Greek or Roman ever knew. The Bible withdraws attention from mere bodily strength, overlooks blind animal courage, and tells "the mighty man not to glory in his might." It makes no account of these things, but presenting us in our higher relations and destinies as moral and immortal beings in a world of probation, and dire spiritual conflict, it pours upon our ear its thrilling voice of command and encouragement. "Quit you like men, be strong!" "As an adamant harder than flint, have I made thy forehead; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house."

This strong figurative language of our text, is intended to express the fact, that God had endowed his ministering servant, the prophet, with an un-

blenching moral courage, together with the implication, that in the faithful performance of his duty, he would need such a courage. This is a kind of power that "in the sight of God is of great price." That moral force which anchors a man to his principles, and holds him firmly there in defiance of the tumultuous violence of an organized opposition from earth and hell—that impulsive energy which carries him through the faithful performance of duty, despite his own remaining depravity, and the dismaying array of outward resistance and perils, is a power far more august and sublime than the mightiest agency of matter or the mere physical force of any number and combination of men. Such is the force, such the energy of the moral courage, disclosed in the metaphorical language of our text. "As an adamant harder than flint, have I made thy forehead." My object in the subsequent remarks shall be, 1st, to inquire into the nature or foundation of this moral courage, and 2d, to notice some of the exigencies that call for such a courage in the ministry of the gospel,-And,

I. I remark very briefly, it is not founded on physical courage, or a reckless hardihood of natural

temperament.

Some men are constitutionally indifferent to danger and difficulties. They feel less and fear less than others of a different mould. By a kind of blind animal force, they brave obstacles and surmount difficulties that would overwhelm more timid spirits. But it is not natural buoyancy nor constitutional bravery that can breast the tremendous resistance made to the office of the ministry, or cope successfully

with the gigantic spiritual evils that lie in the Christian's pathway to heaven. Brute daring may figure and vault on the arena of physical strife, where human muscles form the contending forces. But its prowess is lost when you transfer it to the sphere where the redeemed soul wrestles "with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places." For that conflict the mind must be armed with a courage of higher and heaven-born origin, of mightier and nobler impulse.

II. Nor is this moral courage drawn from outward favourable appearances. There is a fitful encouragement, a buoyancy and hope in religious matters that wax and wane with the lights and shadows of outward appearances. Israel sang and shouted in view of the palpable interposition of God in their behalf at the Red Sea, but their hearts and hones sank in dismay at the stern barrenness of the desert, and they distrusted God for bread and water. Now the moral courage contemplated in our text has no necessary connexion with outward favourable appearances. The prophet Ezekiel had no flattering prospects of a successful and popular ministry amongst the Jews at that time, nor any alluring appearances to stimulate him to a faithful and fearless performance of his official duties. They were a "rebellious house," whose very "looks" were appalling to flesh and blood. So far from its being founded on favourable appearances, true moral courage can only exist and be displayed in the absence of such appearances. It is the means by which God keeps the soul undaunted in duty, when surrounded by all

those threatening and imposing forms of evil, which appal the eye of sense. Sustained by it Paul and Silas, amidst stocks and stripes, chains and manacles, in the "innermost prison," sang praises to God at midnight. It is the provision which God has made to bear up the soul in conscious triumph and noble daring, though the heavens over it gather blackness, and the very "foundations of the world be out of course." If then this moral courage is not the result of physical temperament, or natural bravery, nor derived from favourable appearances, what is its foundation? I answer,

III. That intelligent views of the real character of God form a part of its foundation. Ignorance of God is the parent of superstition and of slavish fear. The distorted views which the sinner takes of the Divine character fill him with dismay, gloom and despondency. And yet in the real character of God. as beheld and adored by the renewed soul, there is a celestial inspiration; a spirit-stirring, captivating glory in every perfection of the divine nature. That soul contemplates the whole character of God. His self-existence, independence, immutability, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and infinite wisdom,-His benevolence, his justice, holiness, truth, faithfulness, and especially his boundless, eternal love and mercy in Christ Jesus to lost sinners. What a resplendent assemblage of attributes are these! When spiritually discerned and believed in by a faith that gives to them substance and living reality, they win the highest confidence of all holy minds. The Christian can confide in such a God with an unshaken trust. The vision of his glory especially as

it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, inspires the sanctified heart with a high moral courage. How obvious is it that such a heart will swell with the inspirations of a divine bravery, from contemplating the real character of a God of love, whose truth and faithfulness are for ever round about him, and justice and judgment the habitation of his throne, a God who always dares to do right, though in doing it he should damn angels to "everlasting chains under darkness," and encounter the system of an eternal hell as a blot on the otherwise fair map of his universe. How naturally will a holy mind derive an undaunted moral courage from its views of the character of such a God, even in the hour of greatest temporal peril and depression. The gloom that settles on the Christian's heaviest hours here cannot alter or obscure the glory of these august attributes of Jehovah! High above the clouds and darkness of earth, they shine out and shine on for ever the same. No "variableness nor shadow of turning" pertains to them. Bright and unchangeable,-the grand constellation of eternity,-they attract the confidence, fire the courage, exalt the hope, light the way and cheer the heart of the Christian, even when "tost by tempests and not comforted" by any earthly solace. That mind which has intelligent views of the real character of God can draw thence a never-failing, all-sustaining courage amidst the mightiest difficulties and the deepest depressions of the Christian warfare!!

IV. Another element of this moral courage is a living faith in the truth of God's word. God has made his truth to be the great aliment of mind,—the

means of vitality and growth to all the nobler principles of our spiritual nature. Light is not more adapted to the structure of the eye than is divine truth to the moral susceptibilities of the mind.

Truth is both the strength and the armour of the Christian soldier. "Having your loins girt about with truth, and taking the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." There is an indomitable energy in that living faith which embraces the great circle of revealed truth, and plants itself in an immoveable confidence on the testimony of God. This results from the very nature of divine truth when fully accredited. Not only the disclosures which it makes of the infinite perfections of Jehovah,-but the views it presents of his great and glorious designs, his eternal purposes and decrees moving on to a certain fulfilment and a sublime consummation,his grand scheme of providence, wise, benevolent, and administered with a divine exactitude and power that include the fall of a sparrow not less than the fate of empires or the dissolution of worlds. The character, hopes, and destinies of men disclosed in the grand economy of redemption,-the oath of the everlasting covenant,—the great and precious promises,-the pledges of almighty aid to our mortal weakness, and the guarantee of an ultimate victory over death and the grave, and an eternal weight of glory in a future world—the faith that clings with certainty and assurance to truths like these, will inspire a moral courage that will cut its way to "honour, immortality and eternal life," through all the embattled hosts of earth and hell! What wonder that ancient worthies, fired with the divine bravery

of faith, should have "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens!"

V. and LASTLY on this point. The testimony of a good conscience, and a sense of the presence and favour of God, are vital to the existence of moral courage. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion." Guilt and moral cowardice are inseparable companions. When conscience is burdened with unrepented sin, the soul is filled with doubt, darkness, distrust and desponding fears. Guilt rolls up a thick cloud between it and its God, so that his real character cannot be seen. The operation of faith on divine truth is thus crippled, a voice of thunder given to the threatenings of God, and the mind agitated with unbelieving, slavish fear. Moral courage and a bad conscience can never co-exist in the same individual. An approving conscience, void of offence towards God and towards man, is indispensable to such courage. The soul must be sweetly at peace with God, the conscience being purified by the blood of sprinkling, and the whole energies of the man must be employed in avoiding even the appearance of evil, and in punctually performing all known duty, if he would feel the inspirations of that divine courage which will sustain the soul undaunted amidst all the terrors of the Christian warfare. But something more than this is necessary to such a courage. It is a courage derived directly from "As an adamant harder than flint have I made

thy forehead." There must be a holy fellowship, an intimate communion between the soul and God, giving assurance of the Divine acceptance and favour. The blessed sense of being a member of the family of God,-of being reconciled to him through the blood of his dear Son,—of having him as our God and Father in Christ Jesus, bound to us by ties of eternal love-pledged to us in all the power, wisdom, goodness, faithfulness and truth of his infinite, unchangeable nature,-that this "God is our God for ever,"-his word our portion-his love the element of our spiritual life—his mercy in Christ Jesus our hope-his indwelling Spirit our comforter and sanctifier,—hisuniversal providence concurring for and centring in our good, and ultimately to extract from our very afflictions here a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory hereafter. The blessed sense that this God is not only our God by formal covenant, but that he has given to us the earnest of the Spirit-that we now feel his favour over us as a shield, -we see his reconciled face lit up with smiles of approbation,—we realize our endeared relation to him as his children,feel an unshaken security in his holy presence always abiding with us-it is THIS that inspires man with a sublime moral bravery! Here is the grand secret of that courage which triumphs over the terrors of the stake and the flames of martyrdom! The consciousness of the love and presence of God,-the confidence of pleasing him,—the hidden power of contact and holy communion with the infinite Mind—the realization of sharing Jehovah's sympathies and being enfolded in the arms of his almightiness, this will fire the Christian's heart with a moral

courage which no terrors can appal, and the cold wave of death itself cannot extinguish. Having thus examined the nature or foundation of moral courage, I now proceed, in the

II. place, to notice some of the exigencies that call for such a courage in the ministry of the gos-

nel.

I. The very position or relations of the minister of the gospel to a world that lieth in wickedness, require him to possess a high moral courage. He stands as the ambassador or representative of a Master "despised and rejected of men," and "hated without a cause." The minister of the gospel is regarded as a kind of impersonation or imbodiment of the religion which he teaches—a religion of "awful goodness"—of dreaded, hated sanctions - of severe and solemn precepts, and of august and fearful destinies. The minister is identified with this religion, and looked upon as the main pillar of a system that is felt to be at war with the whole course of this present evil world. Now, there is a class of men who hate religion for its own sake, and seem to be "leagued by a sworn hostility" to the hopes of a happy hereafter. This class very naturally single out the ministers of the gospel as the objects of their deadliest enmity, and hurl at them the envenomed missiles of their wit, sarcasm, ridicule, scoffs, slanders and violent invectives, just because the holy office, in their minds, is inseparably associated with the hated religion, whose ordinances it administers. Now ministers have the sensibilities of men and a natural love of reputation, and it will require a high moral courage to breast the shock of these assaults un-

moved !-- "As an adamant harder than flint," must be his "forehead," who escapes wounds and blood from those poisoned arrows, and fearlessly maintains the field when they are flying thickly around him. But the minister not only occupies the negative position of a representative of Christ and of religion to the world, he is also Heaven's authorized organ of REBUKE to the vices of that world! He stands as the expositor of the holy law of God-the advocate of its uncompromising claims on the conscience and the heart of a revolted and rebellious race! He is to hear the word at God's mouth, and give the wicked warning from him-He is to gather the darkness. and thunder and lightning of Sinai over the guilty pathway of every transgressor—to reiterate God's own condemnation on the maxims and customs, the principles and motives, the pleasures, pursuits, passions, hopes and prospects of a world lying in wickedness. He is to maintain a stern and solemn remonstrance against all the selfishness, obliquities and wrong-doing of wicked men! His office must be made a standing reproach, a standing memento to them in their criminal career. And he must array before them the terrors of an eternal hell as the portion of their cup, who remain incorrigibly impenitent in the government of God. This he must do single-handed against the great ungodly community—the one against the million—protected by no state establishment-defended by no superstitious sacredness attached to his person, no ghostly power nor pontifical prerogative! If he is faithful and fearless, in this department of his duty, and fastens the rebukes of God's truth on the guilty consciences of

men, he will have to "fight" with them "after the manner of beasts," as did Paul at Ephesus. He will rouse, exasperate and combine their malignity against him, and encounter from them a hostility, that will make war upon him to the knife. Wicked men have always shown, that they have felt a holy, faithful ministry to be the great obstacle to carnal security and false peace in their criminal pursuits. And whatever repressing influence public sentiment may have on the outward expressions of their feeling, in heart they regard such a ministry with unmitigated hate, and will visit its incumbent with every form of enmity, persecution, annoyance and indignity which civil law and popular opinion will permit. It is vain for us, when imbosomed in the affections and respect of our limited pastoral charges, to forget this fact, and feel as though our office secured to us the undissenting homage and kindly regards of the world. Young ministers, especially, are prone to fall into this error, till bitter experience corrects it. Mortifying to our vanity as it may be, it is still true, the great, overwhelming majority of the world, in heart, hate us cordially for our office sake: and we owe our personal safety, and the negative respect of not being molested, more to the restraints of civil law and of public sentiment, than to the intrinsic favour with which the wicked regard us. The ministry is a thankless contemned office; its incumbent regarded by the world as a kind of professional pauper, sustained by the stinted and grudged charities of religionists; and, in fact, he is often more meanly paid than the drivelling demagogue, who gets his petty appointment to gauge rum or inspect tobacco, by

the political favouritism of a corrupt executive. Now the man who bears the holy office, and faithfully applies its tremendous power of rebuke to the conscience of an ungodly world, will need more than Spartan valour to sustain him under the obloquy, hate, and exasperated revenge which the world will roll back upon him from its chafed and galled multitudes! He needs a moral courage with which God Alone can inspire him.

II. The great revolutions in mind, and the changes in character to be aimed at by his agency, require of the minister a high moral courage.

Men who contemplate promoting social or political revolutions, or great changes in the temporal condition of our race, need a stern, unblenching courage. But what are these compared with the revolution of mind and the changes of moral character contemplated by the instrumentality of the minister? To grapple with an immortal mind in its fortified enmity and resistance to God-to beard the lion of native depravity in his lair-to do battle with the strong man armed in his palace—to encounter all the lawless passions of a revolted soul-its long cherished, gigantic habits of doing evil-its unbridled appetites in their sinful and insatiable cravings -to sever the ties that bind it to its guilty courseto break the meshes in which the confederacy and companionship of the wicked, the temptations and allurements of the world have entangled it-to slay its enmity-subdue its rebellion-bring it from darkness to light-from the power of Satan unto God, humbled, reconciled, penitent, submissive, believing, loving, adoring-to change the whole

moral relations of that soul to God and the universe —its entire hopes for time and eternity is probably the greatest revolution in mind that occurs any where in the dominions of God. Yet this is the work at which the agency of the minister aims. O! with what manner of courage ought he to be armed, when single-handed he enters the lists against such fearful spiritual odds, and agonizes for the eternal prize of salvation to a soul!! The changes, too, in moral character, to which his instrumentality is directed, are very great. To aim at the entire transformation of a being once totally depraved—to raise a soul from the pit of corruption to the purity of a child of God and an heir of heaven-from the deep darkness of the apostacy to make it shine as a light in the world, in defiance of the opposing forces of its own remaining depravity, and in the midst of the masses of moral pollution by which it is surrounded, and the multiplied wiles of the devil wielded against it,-to attempt to form a moral character on the very model of Jesus Christ's-to have it animated by the same mind and displaying the same graces that characterized and adorned him-and to have it advance, grow, and increase to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus—till it attains the purity that fits it for a holy and eternal heaven, is a work that might task an angel's instrumentality and try his immortal courage!!

III. To prosecute those grand enterprises of benevolence with which his office and influence are connected, will require of the minister no ordinary moral courage. In prosecuting any enterprise we need a courage proportioned to the obstacles to

be encountered, and to the magnitude of the results contemplated. Now in the great enterprises with which the office and influence of the minister are connected, the obstacles to be encountered are the organized and aggregated opposition of two apostate worlds, earth and hell! The result contemplated, the subjugation of this world to the rule of Messiah. This, perhaps, is the most stupendous enterprise now going on in the vast empire of God! The moral reclamation—the spiritual regeneration and redemption of the whole world!! What a tremendous instrumentality must be exerted for its accomplishment! Think of the mighty details included in such an achievement! All the ignorance of God and of duty-all the errors and prejudices, the superstitions and idolatries under which earth groans are to be removed by the Divine blessing on human agency. All the intrenched enmity and unbelief of the world are to have their strongholds pulled down—the battle axe is to ring on the pillars of the throne of the god of this world, till they crumble beneath its heavy blows, and the whole earth is subdued and brought into the obedience of the faith-all the intemperance and lust, the war and rapine, the oppression and tyranny, the murder and theft, the treachery, and deceit, and civil discords, that curse the globe, are to be removed from bleeding, groaning, humanity.

All that mighty aggregation of miseries, temporal and spiritual, which the great moral overthrow in Eden has brought upon our race, is to be relieved by the untiring assiduities of sanctified, human benevolence. All the discordant and conflicting elements of the whole society of earth are yet to be harmo-

nized—the distinctions of climate and caste,—of national and local prejudices—of varying pursuits and habits--of different forms of government, of clashing schemes of philosophy and religion, and ten thousand nameless diversities that mark all kindreds, and tongues, and people under heaven, are to be so far merged as to leave no barrier in the way of uniting "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, in Lybia, and the strangers at Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians," in one harmonious kingdom under the reign of the great Prince of peace. In a word, the grand enterprise of preparing the way of the Lord for the millennium is yet to be executed. The mountains are to be made low, and the valleys exalted-every obstruction to the chariot wheels of the Redeemer, over the whole extent of earth, is to be taken out of the way. The sacred oracles are to be translated into every tongue, and spread till they shall have visited the home of every human beingthe institutions of Christianity to be established in every land—the great mass of mind, the world over, to be emancipated from the curse, and man restored to the long lost peace of heaven, is to take up the angel song of the nativity, and--

"The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other; and the mountain tops,
From distant mountains catch the flying joy,
Till nation after nation, taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous hosannah round."

Such, brethren, is the august enterprise with which God has joined our instrumentality, and, to the ac-

complishment of which that instrumentality is indispensable. "As an adamant, harder than flint," must be his forehead, who can face unfaltering its mighty obstacles, and live, and labour, and hope on untiring, amidst the delays and discouragements, that lie in the way of its final execution!!

IV. There are certain MAL-TENDENCIES or UL-TRAISMS of this age, to combat which, will require a high degree of moral courage in the minister. In our day the turbulent spirit of radicalism and innovation has taken the course of carrying things lawful and right in themselves to extremes, rather than that of a direct and revolutionary attack upon them. The insidious ingenuity and speciousness of this course is apparent. Philanthropists and sober political philosophers have in this era of intellectual excitement and active benevolence been honestly studying the science of human government, and the philosophy of society with the hope of a farther amelioration of man's physical condition, and an increase of his social comforts and happiness. Now innovators and reckless radicals have taken advantage of this popular movement, and carried it out to the "ultima thule" of Owenism, Fourierism, Brisbanism, till an infidel, atheistic, anarchical agrarianism is urged upon us under the specious pretext of philanthropic sympathy for the great mass of the labouring community, and of an improved state of society. It takes its starting point from the salutary advancement and real benevolence of the age, and attempts to persuade the world that it is still under their banners, when its own gloomy flag without "stripes or stars" is waving over the verge of social and political chaos, and flapping in the storm of up-rooting, levelling revolution.

Again, the liberalizing spirit of protestant Christianity, and of republican government, very naturally gave birth to the freedom of the press. The untrammelled expression of opinion on every subject in which society has an interest, while that expression is within the limits of truth, candour, and justice, is one of the choicest temporal blessings of modern civilization. It is a prerogative of freemen, which they prize above all price. Taking advantage of the public appreciation of this blessing, and of the jealousy felt towards every thing that looked like an invasion of this right, a set of miscreant scribblers, whose only hope of a livelihood was founded on fanning the vulgar prejudice, and inflaming the passions of the worst classes of society, have carried the freedom of the press to the extreme of an appalling licentiousness; so that now not only is the character of our purest patriots thrown by a hireling, lying, political press to the dogs and the vultures of the community, to be devoured by them, but the sanctity of private life is invaded, and the events of domestic history emblazoned in capitals to catch the eyes of the rabble. There is a profligate spawn of penny and other ephemeral sheets hawked upon the wings of every hour, circulated widely, and, like parasitic vermin, live by feeding on the festering vices of society, thus rendering them more foully sore.

All this is pleaded as the glorious *freedom* of the press; and he who would combat it, and strive to roll back the tide of vice and crime which it has raised, must expect to encounter the odium of being

regarded as an enemy to free discussion, and to the liberty of opinion.

Again, the principles of a rational, civil, and political liberty and the great doctrine of the essential equality of rights amongst men have been gaining a deeper hold on the minds of civilized nations, and modifying less or more most of their governments for two centuries past. Liberty and equality have become charm words to modern society, and the THINGS which they indicate commend themselves to man's natural and instinctive sense of justice.

Now a fanatical and pseudo-philanthropy taking advantage of this, and seeming to overlook the fact that an immediate application of the principles of liberty and equality to every class of human beings may be impracticable, has been guilty of the gross ultraism of defining its own method of their application, and insisting that these principles shall be so applied, though it be at the cost of a breach of govermental covenant, the dissolution of the union, the abolition of the Christian scriptures, of the Christian Sabbath, the Christian ministry and the Christian church. Though founding its claims upon the love of liberty and equality, and clamorous in professions of the purest desires for human happiness. can any sane man mistake a blasphemous radicalism like this for the benevolence of the gospel, or even the philanthropy of civilization?* Yetthe minister who opposes these self-constituted guardians of hu-

^{*} These remarks are by no means meant as a sweeping and indiscriminate condemnation on a multitude of men who are termed antislavery. Their application is confined exclusively to those whose peculiar doctrines are here indicated.

man rights, dissents from their measures, and disputes their arrogant claims as the exclusive friend of the slave, will need more than the patience of Job under the volley of vituperation with which he will be assailed, and the moral courage of a martyr, to stand the "fiery trial" of that fierce and unrelenting opposition and hatred which he will have to encounter.

Farther, an enlightened humanity for the last half century has been very active in banishing from society those relics of barbarism and cruelty that have

descended from a darker preceding age.

It has done much to ameliorate the condition of prisons, and to mitigate the unrighteous severities of criminal laws. It is one of the benign influences of the gospel, hailed and cherished by all those who have imbibed the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Now a class of sickly sentimentalists have arisen, who have pressed this enlightened humanity to such a pitch of ultraism, that they cry out against the penalty of death for the crime of murder, and surround and shield its malicious and blood-guilty perpetrator with their profoundest sympathy. Petitions to the legislatures for the abolition of capital punishment, essays in political papers, and orations in popular assemblies are employed to overawe the minister who dares to expound the will of God on this subject, and to declare in the very words of inspiration that "the murderer shall surely be put to death."

The time would fail me to speak of the numerous mal-political tendencies or ultraisms of our day, which deserve and demand faithful rebuke from the minister of the gospel. All our *marked* political tendencies of late have been bad and growing worse

from year to year. They have generated gigantic national and political crimes, and are fast hurrying us "farther and farther from that lofty purity and those incorruptible principles which imparted their dignity to our institutions in earlier times." Let any minister attempt to bring the faithful rebukes of God upon this political wickedness in high places, and see whether his moral courage will not be put to a fiery ordeal.

I say nothing of ultraism under the name of reform in the church;—in some respects the worst of all ultraisms, because for *its* oppressions and wrongs, its excommunications and anathemas, it pleads conscience before God, and covers its head in the day of battle and of stormy revolution with the great \mathcal{E}_{gis} of professed love for the purity and prosperity of Zion, and of zeal for the defence of "the faith once delivered to the saints."

Now let any minister of the gospel withstand to the face all these ultraisms of the day—let him encounter the charge of being an enemy to the improvement of the race, wishing to keep society in the cast iron mould of past and dark ages—of wishing to muzzle the press, and stifle free inquiry—of wishing to rivet the chains on the down-trodden slave—of wishing to sustain a barbarous and bloody code of criminal laws—of being a "party politician," for rebuking political crime, and a heretic and ecclesiastical radical for dissenting from schismatic and revolutionary measures in the church. Let him know that the price of his fidelity is to be paid him in an overwhelming odium like this from church and state, and the minister who can still obey his God, and do his duty in these cir-

cumstances will need all the indomitable moral courage with which his high consciousness of right and his holy confidence in Jehovah can inspire him!

V. Lastly. To act well our part in the great struggle now going on between the religion of ceremony and spiritual despotism on the one hand, and the religion of the heart, toleration and spiritual freedom on the other, will require high moral courage in the ministry.

A history of the moral conflicts that have been waged in our world, would be infinitely more interesting than the chronicles of all the military movements and mighty battles of earth's warriors. Previously to the advent of the Saviour, there was a great overgrown system of idolatry, (which is the religion of ceremony, in its essence and purity.) This system, interwoven with pagan governments, and used as a machine of state, had for ages made war upon and succeeded in corrupting the ancient true religion. The Christianity of the New Testament, on its first promulgation, and in its pristine simplicity and spiritual nower, overthrew this gigantic system, and raised its own unostentatious altar, and performed its simple rites in the palace of the Cæsars. Now the thing which destroyed this first grand victory of spiritual Christianity and religious liberty was the high church, or spiritual despotism principle. This rose and ascended higher and higher as an orb of ill-omen, till it culminated in a popedom, all grasping of universal, temporal and spiritual authority-of human and divine prerogative. The overthrow of this, is to constitute the last grand triumph of Christianity,

brought back to its apostolic simplicity, purity and spirituality! The first onset was made, and battle joined with this fearful power in the time of the ever glorious reformation. But it has been the disastrous mistake of Protestant Christendom, to take it for granted that the victory was completed then, and the great war of these antagonist principles ended. For two centuries has the church rested on the almost unquestioned assumption, that the rights of conscience, religious toleration and spiritual freedom, were established on an immovable basis, and destined to an undisputed, unchecked and irreversible advancement! But he who thinks so now, is a partial observer of the signs of the times, and a superficial student in the philosophy of depraved human nature. Taking the world as it is, and the advancement of these great principles will follow the analogy of that law in hydrostatics, which governs the breakers of the ocean, as they thunder along the beach. The impulse that raises them, and the very force with which they break on the ascending shore, create a regurgitation, a receding current, that carries them back towards the quiet deeps from which the wind aroused them. The antagonism to these glorious principles lies in the great deeps of human depravity, and like those of the ocean, the storm has to rage on the surface some time, before they are agitated so as to produce those counter, under currents, that bring on the great ebb of reaction. It would seem to be our allotment, in the providence of God, to live and sustain the holy office in the very crisis of the commencing reaction of the great impulse of the Reformation. The love of a gorgeous church ritual, that charms

the senses, and fascinates the imagination—the love of a religion of ceremony that promises heaven on the easiest conditions—the love of ecclesiastical power and supremacy—the ghostly ambition of titles and mitres, and all the trappings of spiritual despotism, is not yet dead in the hearts of unconverted These baleful elements that lie deep in fallen human nature, have become roused of late, by the strides both of civil and religious liberty, and by the unwonted zeal and activity of a portion of the church, to propagate and establish a pure, spiritual Christianity. For the last ten or fifteen years we have heard their notes of preparation and witnessed their prelusive movements in the peculiar character of the controversies waged so warmly in the church. It requires but a partial analysis of the real object of the violent disputes which have recently agitated most of the religious denominations, to ascertain that it is, in fact, however men may persuade themselves to the contrary, a struggle for the ascendency of that which in its essence (whatever may be its form) constitutes the high church principle. The toesin that has been sounded is a blended and harmonious peal, from the Vatican at Rome and Oxford in England! "The man of sin" is in the field in full panoply, and in a more determined attitude of war than at any time since the reformation in the days of Luther. All the elements of the religion of ceremony and of spiritual despotism, that lie scattered over Christendom and the world, seem to feel his magic attraction. They have marshalled themselves, made common cause with him, and are ready at this moment to do battle in the agony and desperation of their last

struggle against the religion of the heart, toleration and spiritual freedom. And if racks and gibbets, stakes, fire and fagot do not figure so largely in the present as in former conflicts of this kind, let it not be supposed that the present, on this account, will be the less severe! The advancement of society has invented the weapons of a more refined and deadly execution in moral combat, as well as in the art of modern warfare. And this dread principle of high-churchism or spiritual despotism will not be slow in availing itself of the burnished steel and finely tempered blade that will "wind to the heart of its antagonist keener edged with deeper ill," than the more blunt and cumbrous weapons of the great Reformation. We have hitherto flattered ourselves that this monstrous principle could not stand erect, much less fight successfully in the midst of the liberal and republican tendencies of our age and country. But recent events in the history of ecclesiastical conventions and the recent revival and practice of obsolete and superstitious rites, once the accredited auxiliaries of spiritual despotism, have amply corrected this easy assumption.

The religion of ceremony and spiritual despotism will rally a more numerous phalanx in this republican country than we have ever hitherto suspected. It will imbody a great portion of the wealth, and take all that class of the aristocracy who wish to go "through the gates of Lord Mammon's lodge with the drums and trumpets of worldly pride, and to march magnificently on with all the glittering apparatus of gold and power" to a heaven secured to them by ceremonies. This high church principle

will claim and boast the elite of society as its friends and allies. It will strive to identify itself with the intelligence, gentility and refinements of the age. It will associate itself with the fine arts and polite literature, and thus present to all the gay, pleasureloving, cultivated, poetic, romantic portion of the community a religion of taste, to be enjoyed in splendid cathedrals with massive pillars, "long drawn aisles," and domes of fretted gold,-with gorgeous altars and holy tapers—with the peal of deep-toned bells, the rich harmonies of an exquisite orchestra, volumes of sweet incense-imperial, priestly robes, glittering tapestry, gilded crosses and all the array of imposing tinsel that delights a depraved imagination, and is substituted for "holiness to the Lord." It will gain a vast body of recruits, too, from those who have hitherto been wholly indifferent to all unostentatious religion which retained the simplicity and spirituality of the New Testament. And when once enlisted no class will fight for it with a more fierce and furious bigotry than these. And besides all these classes it will hold in its train that host of timid and irresolute conservatives who would rather "endure the ills that are, than fly to those they know not of." Now with numbers and resources like these -claiming exclusive apostolic authority and succession, unchurching all others, and modestly giving them over to the "uncovenanted mercies of God,"-charging them with the guilt of all the schisms and sects that divide Christendom-holding them responsible for all the innovations, heresies, disorders, and ecclesiastical radicalism of the times, the religion of ceremony will make the attack aided by the tremendous inspirations and the allied powers of him who, according to Milton, occupies more than an archbishop's place in Pandemonium, and whose ambition chose to "reign in hell rather than serve in heaven!" Will it not require the loftiest darings of moral courage to enter the lists against such a foe in behalf of that religion of the heart, that toleration and spiritual freedom, which have their foundation only in enlightened, regenerated human nature?

The mighty antagonism of these principles produces a concussion that is felt in heaven and reaches down to hell!! We are now, perhaps, to witness their last, grand conflict—not as uninterested spectators. We are to take our respective parts in the throes and agonies of this stupendous struggle, and to meet its vast issues in this world and the world to come!! We must look to God to make our "foreheads as an adamant, harder than flint," to face undaunted such a foe! And, girding ourselves with his strength, and intrenching ourselves in his eternal truth, we must do battle without fainting, till the religion of the heart, toleration, and spiritual freedom shall triumph, and shout their final victory in our world.

My dear brethren in the ministry, I leave the practical application of these remarks to yourselves. Many of you are more competent than I to make such application, and to discover the practical bearings and momentous relations of the truths now presented. God has brought us upon the stage, and clothed us with the holy office, in the very crisis of the revived combat and career of those great opposing principles that struggle for permanent ascen-

dency over all that is most valuable in man's immortal nature. For us, for our altars, for our children and our country, ours is a "calamitous distinction! but a sublime one," if fired with a divine courage, and clothed with the whole armour of God, and glowing with zeal for his glory, we enter the lists, act well our part,—resist the mighty foe, even unto blood, "and having done all to stand," approved of God, conscience, our country and the world, as having heroically done our duty in the last desperate agonies of the conflict, and contributed to the final triumph of the cross over the sullied crowns and broken sceptres of a for ever vanquished, routed spiritual despotism.

SERMON VI.

THE ENORMITY OF THE SINNER'S CONDUCT IN MAKING LIGHT OF THE INVITATIONS OF THE GOSPEL.

"But they made light of it."-MATT. xxii. 5.

Such is the brief but graphic history, which the Son of God gives of the treatment which the invitations of the gospel meet with from sinners. In the parable of the marriage of the king's son, of which our text forms a part, the provisions of the plan of salvation are aptly set forth, as also the feelings of the great God in the invitations of mercy. The preparations are ample and splendid, befitting the style of royalty. The invitation sent to the guests is characterized by the mingled feelings of majesty, authority, parental affection, and sensitiveness for the honour of a beloved Son. On the part of those invited, ought to have been gratitude for the distinguished favour thus conferred,-respect, and veneration for the royal authority,—tender regard for parental feeling, and a prompt compliance as an evidence of their loyalty, and of their appreciation of regal favour. But, instead of all this, so natural, and

befitting the occasion, "they made light of it!" Now were the facts in this parable literally to occur at present, it would excite great surprise and indignation, not merely in the king himself, but in the community generally. But the great "King etcrnal, immortal, and invisible," has made a spiritual marriage for his only-begotten Son, and that, too, at the amazing expense of heaven's best treasure and blood. And he has sent a solemn, urgent invitation to men, to come and be honoured guests, and they make light of it-they treat it as they would not dare treat the invitation of a sinful fellow mortal,-and yet it excites no general surprise, and calls forth no indignant reprobation from the community. The text is obviously designed to teach us, that men disregard and make light of the invitation of the gospel, and trifle with all the rich provisions and solemn associations included in it, though these refer to the character and work of Christ, and to the salvation of the soul. I shall enter upon no laboured argumentation to prove this. The every day conduct of men who possess the Bible, and enjoy the ministrations of the gospel, is ample testimony to this truth. Impenitent sinners need no logic to convince them that they are daily making light of God's solemn message to them respecting their salvation. They have the witness in themselves; and I simply refer them to their own consciences, and am willing to abide by their decision. My only object in this discourse will be, to endeavour to help the impenitent to get some just conceptions of their conduct, in making light of the invitations of the gospel. The question which I propose to raise from this text, and to answer if I can,

is this,—what do you make light of in trifling as you do with the provision, the invitations, and offers of mercy in the gospel?

I. You make light of that which relates specially to your immortal part—to your deathless soul. The invitations of the gospel refer not merely to your temporal interests, nor your physical enjoyment, though incidentally, the gospel, when embraced, secures even these. The provisions of the gospel, represented by this marriage feast, relate to your immortal part. While God is not unmindful of those physical wants which you have in common with all animal natures, his great scheme of mercy relates specially to the wants, the desires, the capacities of hope and of happiness in the undying soul. It is your nobler part that is consulted in this great scheme; that part which gives to your nature all the solemn dignity which it has in the scale of being—that soul of yours, which bears the impress -the very image of its God!-that mysterious spirit, made originally but a "little lower than the angels," and decreed to immortality-that soul of yours which has begun an existence that is to run parallel with the eternal being of God himself-that soul that will survive the dissolution of all worldsthat will out-live all the changes that pass on the material universe—that will lose no capacity amidst the wrecks and wastes of time, the convulsions of dooms-day, and the revolutions of immortal ages-YOUR SOUL, sinner, in all its capabilities of virtue or of vice-in all its vast range of powers-in all its elements of growth, progress, and indefinite attainment-in all its susceptibilities of enjoying or suffer-

ing the rewards or punishments which God's eternal government will bestow or inflict on the righteous or the wicked—the soul—the lost, yet recoverable soul, outweighing worlds, and overmatching all the interests of time in its intrinsic worth—this is the mighty. immortal nature, whose recovery, happiness, and salvation, are consulted in the provisions and invitations of mercy. In making light of these, O sinner, you trifle with what relates directly to your own deathless soul, in all the grand interests of its immortality. Make light of the gravest things of timetrifle with all the mightiest affairs of earth, that may affect you only in the present life, and still leave you unhurt for eternity! But, O! make not light of that which touches the immediate interests of the soultrifle not with any thing that has the dignity, the importance, the deep solemnity of relating directly to that immortal spirit of yours, which God has breathed into you, and which you will so soon breathe out again to him, stript of its clay, to be fixed in the reverseless doom of its eternal state!

II. You make light of the most wonderful love that the universe has ever witnessed.

There is something in trifling with the sincere affections of others, the baseness of which every one can appreciate, and is ready to condemn. The human heart feels no wound more keenly than this. Why then has it never struck you, my impenitent friend, that in making light of the offers of salvation, you were trifling with infinite, eternal *love*, and impotently aiming to inflict a wound on the heart of God? Are not the provision, and the invitations of the gospel founded on the most wonderful, incomparable

love that the universe ever witnessed? How shall I attempt to describe the love of God with which you trifle, in your rejection of the offers of mercy? All that the scriptures can say of it, is,-"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." You observe there is nothing here to make out a complete comparison. The particle, "so" would seem to imply some corresponding term in the latter part of the sentence—but there is none. The Bible just refers to the sublime fact of the gift of God's Son, as the measure of his love to the world. And this is a measure utterly incomprehensible by finite minds. How angels, cherubim, seraphim, thrones, principalities, and powers in heaven. tax their capacities to comprehend the degrees of this measure of the love of God to man! They think of that adorable person of the Trinity, in the bosom of the Father, whom they have loved, and worshipped as God equal with the Father—they think of the glory that he had before the world was -the splendours of his eternal Godhead-and then in amazement, they behold нім freely given up by the Father, as the expression and measure of his love to the world! Ah! this is mainly what "the angels desire to look into." If we may judge of love by the sacrifices it will make, (and this is the true criterion) how imagination itself, in its most daring and vast conceptions, is over-matched, lost, and sinks down in despair, as we think of the costly sacrifice which expresses the measure of God's love to man! And to enhance this wonderful love, God commendeth it to us, in "that while we were yet sinners. Christ died for us "

"O for such love, let rocks and hills, Their lasting silence break!"

And what if universal nature were personified, and had a voice loud as seven thunders, and sweet as the music of the spheres, and the heavens over us were one vast speaking trumpet, and earth, and air, and ocean, fitted to send back echoes, as strains from celestial worlds, could all the eternal love of God to man, then, be spoken out to the universe? No!! It will be eternally telling in heaven's language of song, yet never ALL told!!! O! dying sinner, this, this is the love you make light of in slighting the invitations of the gospel. Such a love—so wonderful the universe never witnessed in any other instance. In slighting it, sinner, you make light of that which is the crowning perfection, the most resplendent glory of Jehovah's nature. A glory that specially lingers over you, offering to shed its beams on your darkness here, and to create for you the noontide of heaven hereafter! O! with what an august, awful element you are sporting, when you make light of the infinite love of God, in the invitations of the gospel!

III. You make light of the most sublime sorrows and sacrifices that have ever been witnessed in the empire of God. If we instinctively condemn the one who trifles with the affections of others, we feel a greater revolting, a deeper and more burning indignation when we think of one making light of real sorrows and trifling with a great sacrifice made for him. There is something sacred in sorrow. We feel that we cannot rashly intrude into the retirement of the wounded spirit—that we cannot trifle with impunity in the presence of real grief, nor treat lightly the

heart that bleeds with its own anguish. Now on what are the provision and invitations of mercy to sinners founded? With what are they inseparably associated? With the sorrows and the sacrifice of the Son of God!! This is a theme on which I know not how to speak! Though this is a world of sorrow, and each of us has had bitter drops in our earthly cup, yet who can dare attempt to describe the woes of the "man of sorrows?" We know not what were the great depths of His humiliation "who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, and took on himself the form of a servant, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death." He was born in circumstances of sorrow and shelterless poverty beyond the common lot of man; he encountered the malice of the world when but a tender infant-he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself-he was beset with watchful jealousy and envenomed envy at every step of life. He was rejected by his own to whom he came-"the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"-he was homeless,-he was sorely tried by all the wiles and temptations of the devil,-in his times of extremity he was deserted by friends-his life was often sought by an infuriated multitude—he bore the scourge of tongues, and was calumniated even as having a devil-his instructions were despised—his miracles disputed, and an attempt made to explain them by a reference to Satanic agency. But all these were not the principal sorrows of the Saviour. In the tears he shed over Jerusalem there is the evidence of a kind of

sorrow widely different and infinitely more intense than all external troubles. The comprehensive and mournful views which his holy mind took of the dreadful condition of the race that he came to seek and to save, awakened emotions of consuming grief, of which mortals cannot adequately conceive. With what a different eye he looked on the world from that of the best mere man that ever lived. How he estimated the dangers of the impenitent and the deep ruin of their souls, none but himself can ever know! Imagine, were it possible, how he felt in a world of revolt and rebellion against God, full of sin and spiritual death,-himself the only unfallen, holy being amongst all its millions of inhabitants. O! what were the sorrows of the Saviour's soul in this view? He stood alone in the anguish of spirit produced by this cause,—there was not one on earth that could fully sympathize with him. And then think, too, amidst all those external troubles and this deep internal sorrow of his mind over the moral ruins and monstrous sins of the world,—think how the anticipation of the more awful sufferings that were to constitute his atonement was ever crowding upon his soul its dark images from the future! How many silent thoughts of anguish from this source sank on his holy heart with a heaviness never known to mortals! We next. follow him to Gethsemane, as he enters on the direct sufferings involved in his expiation for the sins of the world. Who would dare to describe his emotions when there beneath the pall of midnight he exclaims to his disciples-"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." There is a mysterious

emphasis, a divine pathos in these words that cannot be expressed. But we pass from this to a more remarkable declaration. "And being in an agony, he prayed the more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground!!" On the Saviour's lonely agony at that moment it would seem profane to make a comment. Nor need I dwell on all the circumstances of his arrest and mock trial, that aggravated the already consuming woes of his stricken soul. Around the meek sufferer at Pilate's bar and in Herod's court there is an atmosphere of hallowed sorrow—there are pangs and throbs of agony in his sinless bosom there, whose very greatness overawes us into silence. But what did he not endure when, on the cross, he entered upon the awful rite of offering up himself a sacrifice to God for the salvation of the world! O! that sacrifice—those sorrows—those exquisite agonies of mind which it involved—the greatness of that one offering for sin, which called for the darkened heavens, the rending rocks, quaking earth and opening graves to attest its divinity!! Has God's vast empire ever witnessed so sublime sorrows, so august a sacrifice. No! In all the woes of the universe there are none like those which Jesus bore for our salvation. No sorrows so tender, so stupendous as hisno sacrifice that has been or will be so felt in its bearings on man's destinies or on God's government in time and through eternity! O! who could make light of these sorrows of a crucified Saviour? Who could trifle and sport with the awful sacrifice which he made of his soul to God for man's salvation? Yet you, my impenitent friend, in making light of

the invitations of the gospel, do trifle with these deep, sacred sorrows of the Saviour's soul, and contemn the glorious sacrifice which he made of himself for a world's atonement. This is the very charge which God himself brings against you when he says "you trample under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant with which he was sanctified an unholy thing," whenever you reject the offers of mercy. O, dying sinner! did your conduct ever appear to you in this light before? Did you ever think yourself capable of such enormity in sin as to make light of all the tender, deep, hallowed sorrows of the Son of God, and to contemn that stupendous, that divine sacrifice, which he made of himself for your salvation?

IV. In making light of the invitations of the gospel, you make light of precepts enforced by the most weighty and awful sanctions. While the gospel presents the wooing entreaties of eternal love, and exhibits a mercy that follows and yearns over its impenitent rejecter with infinite tenderness, yet it is a great mistake to suppose that the gospel has no authoritative claims to press upon the sinner. It has precepts, not less than promises—penallies, not less than rewards. Now we regard it as an indication of great depravity and hardihood in crime for a man to make light of the sanctions of criminal law. Few attain a recklessness that enables them to do so. Men generally do not make light of large fines, of long periods of imprisonment - of a lifetime of solitary confinement and hard labour-of the penalty of hanging, or any other ignominious death. These sanctions that lie within the range of earth,

and reach not beyond the present life, overawe and keep in check the social wickedness of mankind. Men do not trifle with them. But what are these compared with the mighty sanctions attached to the precepts of the gospel? Besides the invitations and offers of mercy, God in the gospel "commands all men every where to repent," And what is the sanction of this precept? "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And what is the sanction to enforce this precept? "He that believeth not, shall be damned!" What finite mind can grasp and master the magnitude of these sanctions? They are not confined to the limits of earth, nor the duration of the present life. They consist not in temporal pains and penalties. They relate not to mere bodily suffering, nor to the ruin of social happiness; they strike not at man's terrestrial destinies only! They are sanctions drawn from a future world! They take hold on a vast range of eternal interests-they relate to the soul's reverseless immortal doom! Endless perdition-hopeless damnation, are the penalty of disobedience to the precepts of the gospel. O what sanctions! The loss of the sour! the blotting out of all the hopes of its eternal existence -a returnless exile from its God-an absolute exclusion from heaven, and the fellowship of all the holy -solitary confinement in the gloomy prison of God's retributive wrath-"everlasting chains under darkness "-perfected in depravity-the victim of the worm that never dies-of the fire that is never quenched-weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth -the bitter portion of its immortal cup! What

sanctions! Awful as the ruin of all the highest interests of the soul for eternity—as the nameless woes of an eternal hell!! O my impenitent friend! if you are influenced and restrained from crime by the thought of imprisonment for life, or the ignominy and horrors of the gallows, why do you make light of the weighty and eternal sanctions of the precepts of the gospel? These sanctions are more weighty and terrible than the penalty of mere moral law. "For if he that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be counted worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace!!" And, "if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" How obviously does God here teach us that the sanctions of the gospel are more awful than the penalty of the law. To the thoughtful mind, there is the sublime of horror in these sanctions! They constitute, and will consist of all those displays of Jehovah's retributive wrath, which he thinks sufficient to vindicate to the whole universe through eternity his unsullied authority, his abused, injured love-the sorrows and sacrifice of his Son trifled with and contemned—the Holy Ghost quenched and grieved by those who have made light of the invitations of the gospel!! O impenitent man! is it possible that you, who will tremble and turn away with revolting from the stake or the gallows, will

make light of sanctions that involve the "shame and everlasting contempt" of the second death—the horrors and hopeless agonies of the damned through immortality!! How can you trifle with sanctions that will make God's universe serious, through the dateless ages of his righteous government, and will hold his great empire in awe for ever and ever!

V. Lastly, in making light of the invitations of the gospel, you make light of the highest and noblest destinies to which human nature can possibly rise. are not insensible to the distinctions and destinies to which they may rise in the present life. However trifling and temporary these distinctions may be, the desire to attain them keeps the world in bustling activity. The man who makes light of them is regarded as lost to his best interests, and destined to a degradation that will make him dangerous to society. But what are the highest destinies of earth compared with those which the gospel presents to the hopes and aspirations of man? To what are you invited by the gospel? To an immediate change for the better in your moral condition and relations. You are called from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, from the pit of corruption to the purity of heart that shall see God, from rebellion to reconciliation through the blood of atonement, from guilt to pardon, from condemnation to justification, from enmity to love and friendship with God, from exile to intimate union with Jesus Christ, from remorse and wretchedness to peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost, from a degraded moral character to the very image of the Son of God, from a grovelling sphere of wicked works to a benevolent

activity God-like, elevating, blessing and blessed in all that it does. And is not this the highest destiny which human nature can attain in the present world? To be saved from the dominion and pollution of sin, to be pardoned and received into favour with God. to be united to Christ, to be filled with joy and peace in believing, to have a character bearing the very lineaments of the Saviour, and to be bringing forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness in this life is an incomparably higher destiny than any other on earth. Now this is the noble distinction in the present life, which you make light of by slighting the gospel. But the grander destinies held out in the gospel pertain not to this world. Christ's kingdom, in more senses than one, is not of this world. Man is immortal. This world is but the cradle of his eternal existence! As he has the germ of an imperishable being, so it contains all the capacities that fit him for great destinies in an everlasting futurity. Now the gospel pre-eminently, has brought life and immortality to light. Its invitations not only point to the grave and promise a splendid triumph to the soul over the last enemy of its mortal nature, but they point beyond to boundless realms of light and joy. There is an eternal heaven of purity and peace, of loveliness and repose, there is perfection in holiness for the soul there, there is immortal companionship, sympathy, and similarity, with all the good and the great gathered from the universe to grace the court of the Eternal King, there is an endless progression in knowledge, holiness, and bliss, an eternally increasing activity in well-doing, there is a crown of more glittering glory than were it studded

with all the material suns and stars that God has made; there is a throne more resplendent than the condensed lustre of all the worlds of light ever created! There is the presence of the infinite God; the visions of Jesus' face, as the eternal sunshine of the soul. In that light the gospel tells you that you may live and move and have your endless blissful being. To that glorious empire you may rise, and be a king and a priest unto God for ever! Nay, that you may go there and hold a relation as a redeemed soul to your Redeemer, that will constitute a higher and more endeared distinction than the mightiestangel enjoys! What a destiny of inconceivable glories! A great coronation, an august enthronement, a participation of the soul in the joys of its Lord, amidst the harps and songs, the light and splendours, the triumphs and eternal transports of bliss in heaven. O, can human nature rise to such a destiny? Yes, "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it:"-"Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." O my God! can human nature make light of such a destiny? Yes, dying sinner, you make light of these highest noblest destinies, to which any finite nature can rise. You slight the mercy that invites and woos you to them. You throw away as worthless the prize of an eternal heaven, you trample its crowns and thrones, its suns and stars beneath your reckless feet. You contemn that infinite aggregation of glories and of joys which Jehovah judges to be amply sufficient to express to the universe and through eternity, His approbation and love of the righteous, and to constitute the rewards and confer

the raptures of eternal blessedness on all the sinless and the saved of his universal empire! O, is there madness like this any where out of the great madhouse of perdition? My dear impenitent friends. while God forbears with you, and gives you time for reflection, O pause and think of what you are making light, as you disregard the invitations of the gospel. O, will you, can you turn coldly away from the offered, exalted destinies of an eternal heaven? If you can, if you will trifle with this message, too, as you have done with all the invitations of your God heretofore, O, how will he regard your conduct in this matter? and how will you dare any longer to presume on his continued patience and forbearance with you? When you reflect on the enormity of your course, do you not wonder, sinner, that these heavens are not already gathering blackness over you, and the eternal throne, high above them, sending out the "seven thunders" of its condemnation on conduct like this?

Let me say to you, my dear friends, in conclusion, that there will be a limit to this forbearance and long-suffering, and to your trifling too, with the warnings and invitations of your God. You cannot always thus make light of them. Occasions await you, not long hence, when all that is included in the offers and invitations of the gospel, will be felt by you to be an infinitely serious reality, The instances are exceedingly rare, in which men, when racked with pain, overwhelmed with calamity, and shaken on the verge of an eternal state, make light either of the wrath or the mercy of a holy God.

A few hours of severe illness will be sufficient to correct this shocking, this Heaven-daring levity.

Approaching death will make a vast change in the sinner's apprehensions on this subject, and will turn his whole intellect into one serious, aching thought, his whole heart into one solemn, agonized feeling. When the deep covering is once removed from you dread eternal world, and the eye of the departing spirit is fastened on those awful realities which then rise on its view, God's warnings and invitations in the gospel will appear to be infinitely serious and momentous matters! The trembling soul will trifle with them no more for ever. The awe of eternal realities will be upon it. But all its intense seriousness and solemnity then will be of no avail. It will be the seriousness of remorse and fruitless regret, the deep solemnity of everlasting despair gathering upon the lost soul the gloom of an endless night of wo. Dear friends, shall this be your first seriousness, your first solemn thoughtfulness on the great truths of God? God forbid. Reflect on these themes now in the sunshine of mercy and of hope, in the calm of the Sabbath, and in the quiet of health and ease. Wait not for the darkness and storms of adversity, nor for the more troubled and gloomy moments of dissolution to wake you to solemn thoughtfulness. Come with a penitent believing heart now, and embrace the too long neglected offers of salvation, and weep at the Saviour's feet at the thought that you ever made light of them.

SERMON VII.

CHRISTIAN REPROOF,—THE OBLIGATIONS TO THIS DUTY,—THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO ARE TO ADMINISTER IT,—THE SPIRIT IN WHICH IT SHOULD BE GIVEN, AND ITS HAPPY RESULTS.

"Let the rightcous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head; for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamity."—Psalm cxli. 5.

Solomon has said that "open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." God has made Christian reproof a means of growth in grace. A disposition to receive such reproof meekly, and to profit by it, is one decisive evidence of true piety. The language of the sensitive, circumspect, sincere Christian is-" If my own heart do not smite me as it ought, let my friend do it! Let me never fall under that dreadful judgment of being let alone in sin!" The partiality which we naturally feel for every thing pertaining to ourselves-the deceitfulness and blinding influence of sin, and the spirit of self-indulgence, from which the best are not wholly free, render faithful Christian rebuke indispensable as a means of sanctification. This is one form of Christian influence on our brethren, for which there

is no substitute. Our fraternal affection, our good wishes, and our prayers for our fellow Christians will never supply the place of frank, faithful reproof. That this is one of the most difficult of Christian duties, all those who have honestly endeavoured to perform it, well know. But difficulty in the performance of a duty is no argument against our obligations to do it faithfully. The important instrumentality which Christian rebuke has in promoting the spiritual welfare of souls, cannot be dispensed with, because of the pains-taking effort necessary to the performance of this duty. The Psalmist felt his need of this means of grace, and he openly invited his brethren to be faithful in their reproof, and promised that he would not only receive it kindly, but endeavour to derive from it the advantage which God designed it to confer. "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head; for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamity."

In the subsequent remarks, I shall, in the 1st place, briefly notice the obligation to this duty of Christian reproof,—2d, the character of those who are to administer it.—" Let the righteous smite me." 3d, the spirit in which reproof should be given—and 4th, some of the happy results of the performance of this duty.

I. The obligation to the duty of Christian reproof. I assume it as granted here, that you know what is meant by the duty of Christian reproof. It is not talking about the faults of our brethren to others: it is not reproaching them for their faults in the spirit

of the Pharisee, thanking God that we are not sinners such as they. It is not taunting them for their inconsistencies, with a feeling of self-gratulation that we are free from like blemishes ourselves. No: it is pointing out to them alone, their sin in some particular thing, and tenderly remonstrating with them, to repent of and forsake it. The obligation to this duty I should not feel it necessary to notice, were it not a duty so grossly neglected. I might argue the obligation to this difficult and neglected Christian duty, from the very relation which we hold to our fellow Christians, from the general benevolence of the gospel, requiring us especially to do good to "them of the household of faith," from brotherly love-from the very circumstances in which Christians are placed, and from the known influence which they have on each other, from the fact that just such an instrumentality as Christian reproof suits the social nature of man, and that nothing can supply its place. But I pass over all these, and rest the obligation to this duty on the simple authority of the Bible. In Lev. xix. 17, we have the following-"Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour and not suffer sin upon him." Solomon says, " Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee." "But to them that rebuke him, shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them." A greater than Solomon hath said, "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him." Again-" Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others may fear." "Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering."-" Wherefore rebuke them sharply." These are a few of many similar texts of Scripture, that might be cited to show that the obligation to the duty of Christian reproof is just as solemn and weighty, as that which binds "him who stole to steal no more"—or as that which binds each one to "provide things honest in the sight of all men." There is not a duty of our holy religion more clearly revealed, or more cogently enforced by a Scriptural obligation than the one now under consideration. And Christians will never appreciate this duty, nor perform it aright, till their consciences will cry out and condemn them for its neglect, as severely as for neglecting to keep the Sabbath—attend on public worship, read their Bibles, pray, or be honest in their ordinary dealings.

II. Let us notice now, in the second place, the character of those who are to administer reproof to others-" Let the righteous smite me." The Psalmist did not invite every one to take this liberty with him. If he had, officious ignorance would have been the very first to accept the invitation! The radicals and self-constituted reformers of his day, would have dealt their barbarous blows greatly to the annoyance if not to the breaking of the royal Psalmist's head .-It is with the duty of Christian reproof, as it is with certain other delicate social duties, those who are least qualified, are most forward and noisy in attempting to perform it. To such God might justly say, "What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee!" There is one indispensable requisite in the character of those who administer rebuke to others-viz., they must "take the beam out of their own eye" before they attempt the delicate work of taking "the mote" out of their brother's eye .-

"Let the RIGHTEOUS smite me." Let the sincere, humble, constant Christian, who is blameless and harmless, the child of God, without rebuke, let him administer reproof. Let the conscientious man, who endeavours to keep himself always in the love of God, who is a pattern of righteousness and peace, reprove and rebuke others. This is Christian reproof, and has the weight which God designed it to have. It is spoken as by one having authority—it comes from one to whom you cannot apply the cutting retort, "Physician, heal thyself." To reprove sin in others, is but carrying out the sincere abhorrence which he feels for his own sins, and endeavouring to promote in his brother the purity of heart after which he daily pants himself. It is in perfect keeping and consistency with the general tenor of his own holy life. It is only from the righteous that rebuke can consistently come, and only when administered by them will it exert the salutary influence to reclaim and save an erring brother. Every thing then under the name and pretence of rebuke, which does not emanate from the very spirit of righteousness, degenerates into mere fault-finding and abuse, and is ordinarily vented to gratify personal dislike or malignity. But if it be the righteous only who can properly administer Christian reproof, may they administer it equally as well and with the same success in any and every temper of mind in which for the time they may happen to be? This introduces the third general topic of discourse, which was to notice THE SPIRIT in which Christian rebuke is to be administered.

A. And I remark first, that it must be in the spirit of true Christian meekness. A proud, pharisaical,

self-glorving spirit never can administer a reproof acceptably to God, or profitably to one's-self or his fellow men. The haughtiness of one puffed up with a false estimate of his own spiritual superiority, will render him wholly incapable of performing the duty now under consideration. God has not left us to mere conjecture on this point. He has decided the importance of Christian meekness, as an indispensable qualification for the performance of this duty in the following precept. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of MEEKNESS, considering thyself, lest thou, also, be tempted." Mingled with a sincere and tender compassion for the offender, there must be an humbling conviction of our own frailty and liability to sin, and while we reprove him we must cherish a holy fear of falling ourselves. We must go to our erring brother, and rebuke him in that meek, gentle, subdued spirit, resulting from a penitent view of our own numerous sins in the sight of God, and from an apprehension that we may soon need the Christian repoof of a brother for our own faults.

All harshness, abruptness, overbearing and censoriousness, are utterly opposed to the spirit in which Christian rebuke is to be administered. It is emphatically true in this case, that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." Above all, the one who would kindly and faithfully reprove the faults of a brother, must not himself be easily irritated, but be slow to wrath. Rebuke is painful, if deserved, and sometimes, at first, it excites anger, and

leads to irritating words. If then the reprover have not a gracious control over his own temper, he may display a hasty spirit, that will not only destroy the power of his rebuke, but deserve itself to be rebuked; though some men do seem to think that there is neither sin nor danger in being angry. The meekness and gentleness of Christ, the charity that suffereth long and is kind, is not easily provoked, must sway the heart and control the tongue in administering Christian reproof. Any other spirit will only dictate scornful reproach, as injurious to him who utters it as to him on whom it is heaped!

B. Secondly—Christian reproof must be administered in a spirit of real kindness and brotherly love for the individual reproved, and with a sin-

cere desire to do him good.

Even in partially sanctified men there is sometimes a disposition to tell others their faults, not through pure benevolence. Personal dislike-pique or secret grudge will also prompt to this! And so will the unhallowed feeling, that it gives us a kind of superiority to be reprovers of our brethren. I can hardly believe that a Christian would ever tell another his faults merely for the sake of mortifying the offender; and yet even this is possible. But such a spirit God will frown upon and condemn, and the reproof which it dictates differs very little from the accusations of the devil. A sincere love for our erring brother's soul-a benevolent regard for his spiritual welfare—the desire that he should have the peace of God, and joy in the Holy Ghost-that he should grow in grace, and be more and more useful; -this is the spirit with which we are to administer reproof. The law of brotherly kindness must be on our lips-the benevolence of Christ in our hearts. In rebuking our offending brother, we must make it apparent that it is his highest good that we honestly seek. In reproving him, it must be obvious that we have no malignant gratification, no spleen to ventno superiority to arrogate to ourselves. It must be manifest to him that we do it from a sincere conviction of duty-from the fact that we regard it as one appointed means of his sanctification, and that if we did not love him and devoutly desire his holiness and happiness as a Christian, we could never be induced by other and inferior motives to attempt this painful duty. O there is a power in Christian rebuke, when administered in a spirit like this, which will subdue and reclaim any thing but a heart of adamant!

c. Thirdly.—Christian reproof is to be administered in a spirit of firmness and fidelity. This is not inconsistent with Christian meekness and gentleness, nor with fraternal kindness and tender benevolent desire to do our offending brother good. A timid, vacillating, temporizing spirit, will never effect any thing in reproving and correcting the obliquities of others. The hand of the surgeon who amputates a diseased limb or fungous growth from the human body, must be a steady hand, unmoved by the cries and the writhing of the patient. It is not cruelty, but kindness to the sufferer, that keeps the surgeon undiverted and firm to his purpose, till the operation is performed. So he that would successfully administer Christian reproof, must have his heart in the fear of God, firmly set on the work. He must go with an inflexible determination, by Divine aid, to

accomplish what he attempts. The wincing irritability, and provoking replies of the offender, must not for a moment divert him from his purpose, or throw him off his guard. With an affectionate, prayerful, devout, and immovable spirit, he must bring the power of rebuke on his erring brother's conscience, and hold it there without shrinking or trembling, till it has won that brother, or proved him to be incorrigible! No false pity—no unwarrantable leniency to his faults-no ignoble fear of risking our popularity with him and incurring his dislike, must cause us to waver in our determination, or to cease from our work, till it be accomplished. And then we are to be as faithful as we are firm. We are not to cloak or palliate his fault. We are to talk to him as we are tempted to talk about him to others. The admirable point and pungency of Nathan's rebuke to David, shows us the importance of fidelity in this duty. There is no place for circumlocutionfor indirect intimations, or for any compromise of the palpable truth in the case. Tell him his fault honestly, frankly, fully;—let him know just how it appears to you and to others-how it mars his Christian character, grieves his brethren, and puts a stumbling-block in the way of the wicked. Show it to him in the light of God's word, and not with the glosses which man's estimate puts upon it. Suffer him not to escape from the point of your rebuke by drawing your attention to the faults and inconsistencies of others, but tell him, if he knows so well how others ought to live, and sees that they fail, so much the more is he obligated to walk circumspectly himself. Repeat the declaration to him-"Thou art the man." Let

him know that your business is with him, and that his business, for the time being, is with his own sin, not the sins of others. Do not permit him to conceal from his own eyes, and to attempt to conceal from yours, the deformity of his sin, by the flimsy veil of soft names for it, or by any apology. In all good conscience and Christian fidelity, do you tear off the veil, and in tears beseech him to look at his fault in its naked deformity as seen in heaven, till his eye shall affect his heart-till, penitent and subdued, he is recovered from sin-restored to the fayour of God and to the practice of consistent piety. Are there any happy effects to be realized from the faithful performance of this duty? This was the fourth and last general topic proposed in this discussion,namely, the blessed consequences of Christian reproof.

I. The first that I shall mention is, that it will free the Christian who performs this duty from being partaker of other men's sins, and will give him a peace of conscience which he cannot otherwise enjoy. God has solemnly warned Christians in the following words: "Be ye not partakers of other men's sins." Now that professing Christian who fails to rebuke or reprove a brother whom he knows to be in fault, silently assents to that brother's sin! His conduct obviously shows that he either does not consider his brother as sinning at all, or that his fault is so trivial that it is not necessary to tell him of it, or use any means to free him from it. This is the inference which the erring brother himself draws, as well as others around him. Now though we are not the keepers of our brother's soul, we are, to some extent, the keepers of his religious character; and we have the capability, under God, of

preventing his sin and promoting his holiness. For all the influence which we might use to free him from his faults, and which we do not exert, God will hold us accountable. And in all the sins which he commits in consequence of our neglect to reprove him. we are direct partakers.—A portion of the guilt attaches to us, and will be found on our souls in the day of trial, unless we repent and do our duty to him faithfully. Now we may complain of this as hard, if we choose, but this will not alter the case. There is no possible way in which we can free ourselves from being partakers of other men's sins, but by living holy lives ourselves, and by firm, faithful, Christian reproof to them for their faults. Not only must our lives testify against their delinquency, but our lips, in kind, frank rebuke, must tell them their sins, remonstrate with them, and beseech them to turn from the error of their way. Thus shall we be delivered from a dreadful participation in their guilt, and have the testimony of a good conscience. Valuable as this testimony is, and essential as it is to the happiness of a moral being, it cannot, in the nature of the case, ever be enjoyed but by those who in any wise, at any hazard and sacrifice, perform the duty of faithful Christian rebuke to their erring brethren. O who would not feel richly rewarded for fidelity in this duty, by the thought that he was untarnished by the guilt of other men's sins, and blest with a peace of conscience to be procured on no other terms!!

II. Another happy effect of faithful Christian reproof is, that it is often the means of breaking the spell and delusions of sin on a brother's mind, which have withstood all other influences. One of the essential characteristics of sin is its power to infatuate its victim. Hence the Scriptures speak of "the deceitfulness of sin!" It often binds the individual under its power, as by a spell of enchantment. He cannot see himself as every one else can see him. He appears to be strangely insensible to his true spiritual condition. He looks at every thing through the false medium that sin has thrown around it,-learns to justify, to himself at least, that which his own conscience once condemned, and lives for a season comparatively contented and happy in his criminal indulgences. This was precisely David's case in the matter of Uriah. He had a conscience, had the word of God, that is, the law and that portion of the Old Testament extant in his day, he had religious ordinances, and all the means of being awakened to a sense of the great guilt he had contracted in that case; and yet the charm of sin held him in a strange insensibility for a length of time, and he seemed to enjoy the unlawful gratifications in which he indulged. How much longer his conscience would have slept and his heart reposed in the lap of Delilah, we know not, had not God commissioned Nathan to go to him and administer faithful Christian rebuke. After all other means had failed, this succeeded in breaking the accursed spell of sin on his soul, and in overwhelming him in the deep repentance which he vents so touchingly in the fifty-first Psalm. And it is just as true now, as in the days of the Psalmist, that faithful Christian reproof will succeed in destroying those enchantments of sin on the mind, which have withstood all ordinary means of awakening and re-

covering the wanderer. And we can see an adaptation in this duty, to produce this happy result. Christian rebuke avails itself of the social and sympathetic laws of our nature. When our brother comes to us in the meekness of the gospel-with a heart knit to us in Christian love, yearning over us in sincere and devout desires for our spiritual welfare, and determined to benefit us and promote our sanctification, if possible, and then reproves us for our sins, showing by every line of his countenance, every glance of his eye, and every intonation of his voice, that he is deeply convinced that we are sinning against God, and wounding our own souls, that his heart is ready to break in anguish over the course that we are pursuing, and that his only motive for reproving us and remonstrating with us, is to promote our own highest happiness, our spiritual and eternal good, who can resist the appeal? Unless we be given over to a reprobate mind, we must imbibe a portion of his tender spirit, catch the warm Christian sympathies of his heart, have the conviction of his mind in reference to our sin become the conviction of our minds, and be melted into penitence, and delivered from the delusions of the destroyer! O! what an incalculable loss do Christians and the church at large sustain, by the neglect of a duty, which, when faithfully performed, is often successful in reclaiming from that infatuation of sin which resists all other means. "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, that shall not break my head."

III. A third happy effect of the faithful performance of this duty, is, that it will prevent the evil of tale-bearing and back-biting. A prevalent, giant evil this,

in some of our churches. Any thing that promises to remedy this evil, ought to be hailed with gladness by Christians. God has brought his authority to bear on it in the direct command, "Thou shalt not go up and down in the land as a tale-bearer; thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." thing is more manifest than that professing Christians are not permitted to talk about the faults of others, till they go to them and tell them their faults alone, -and if they are not reclaimed, then to bring them before the church for trial. This second step must be taken, and the individuals condemned, after a fair hearing, before Christians are at liberty to talk about their sins. This is God's rule on the subject. How much it is regarded, some of our consciences can testify. Now we say, that one blessed result of faithful Christian reproof, will be to prevent this evil of tale-bearing, and back-biting. If you go at first in the spirit in which reproof ought to be administered, and tell your erring brother his fault between you and him alone, you may, in some instances, find that you were mistaken—that your brother is not guilty in the matter, as you had supposed; and then, of course, when he sets you right, you cannot, without deep guilt, go about speaking of his fault to others as you would have been tempted to do before you saw him, and received his explanation. Or, if you find that your brother is actually in fault to the whole extent that you thought him to be, if you firmly and faithfully rebuke him, you will convince him of his sin, lead him to repentance, and win your brother, and then with what face can you go about talking to others of his faults? You could not have a heart to publish a penitent, reclaimed brother's sins? The very spirit

of Christian reproof would forbid this, and lead you rather to desire to conceal his faults, and to shield and sustain his reputation. The heavenly spirit of Christian rebuke, and that hellish malignity that is gratified to receive and circulate reports injurious to the character of a fellow Christian, can never co-exist in the same heart. Let all Christians perform faithfully the duty of reproof in the right spirit, and there will be no temptation to the diabolical work of talebearing and back-biting. The evil would cease in our churches, or become so rare that the accuser and calumniator of his brethren would be regarded with a righteous abhorrence as doing the work of his father the devil, and be brought under the discipline of the church, and excluded from its peaceful and holy communion.

IV. The only other happy effect of the faithful performance of this duty, which I shall now notice, is, that it will promote amongst Christians a spirit of brotherly love and prayerfulness for each other.

To be convinced of this we have only to contemplate the state of mind with which Christian reproof is administered, and the state of mind which, when successful, it produces in him to whom it is administered.

The reprover goes to the offending brother in a tender, meek spirit—with sincere love for his soul, and benevolent, ardent desires to promote his spiritual welfare, and kindly tells that brother of his sin, pleads with him to repent and turn from it, and to come again, pardoned, and accepted, to the bosom of his God. The offender feels that all this is done in brotherly kindness,—done in love to him, and for

his highest good, and he is convinced of his sin-his heart is broken under the tender remonstrances of his brother,—he is delivered from the spell of sin feels anew the love and peace of God returning to his soul, and cannot but be grateful to the one by whose faithful rebukes he has been thus restored. Now will not these two men be knit together more closely than ever, in the bonds of brotherly love? Is there not a foundation thus laid for a more endeared attachment between them, in all subsequent time? Will they ever cease to pray for each other, and to sympathize with each other in the trials and conflicts of the Christian life? Now what is true of the case of these two individuals, would be true of all the instances in a church where Christian rebuke is properly administered, and kindly received! What a blessed consequence of the faithful performance of this duty! How it would assist in "keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace "-in banishing prejudice, alienation and hatred -in promoting brotherly kindness, and charity, and in bringing the power of affectionate, fervent, effectual prayer to bind the whole church fast to the throne of God, and more firmly to each other, in "the love of the Spirit."

To conclude. Christian brethren, how far have we been faithful in the performance of the duty of true, Christian reproof? Have we endeavoured habitually, and conscientiously, to perform this duty toward all our brethren whom we know to be in fault? Are there not some professing Christians, who have never, since they were first connected with the church, made one serious attempt to rebuke an erring brother? They plead as an apology for

this grievous delinquency, that they are deterred from the duty by a delicate and deep sense of their own faults.

But it may be asked whether such professing Christians are so sensible of their own faults that they never talk about the faults of a brother to others? If they are not, then their sensibility is of the wrong kind, and it will be no excuse before God or man for their neglect of the solemn duty of faithful Christian reproof. No finite mind can compute, and no language adequately describe the disastrous results to the church of the prevalent, and almost total neglect of this duty. A most lamentable recklessness characterizes the members of various communions respecting each other's spiritual welfare. Amongst some professors of religion, there seems to be no conscientious, holy fear of offending God, nor injuring a fellow Christian by neglecting this duty; whilst without scruple they take up evil reports against each other, and circulate them industriously, without ever going to the individual criminated, and inquiring into the truth or falsehood of that, to which they give currency. This is the way "to bite and devour one another, and to be consumed one of another 133

Christian brethren, "these things ought not so to be." Have a care for your brother's soul, next to that for your own.

It is only when Christians awake to the infinite importance, and gird themselves in earnest for the faithful, and persevering performance of this duty, that the light of the church shall be "as the light of seven days in one," her "peace as a river," and her "righteousness as an overflowing stream."

SERMON VIII.

THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE.*

"But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts."—1 Thessalonians, ii. 4.

It required no ordinary strength of Christian character, and no common measure of moral courage, to enable the apostle Paul, under all the virulent attacks made upon him in different places, to retain such a degree of public confidence in his integrity, as caused him still to prosecute the work of the ministry with marked success. That it was the combination of these two elements—strength of Christian character and moral courage—by which, under God, he sustained himself in the confidence of the irreligious themselves, is apparent from his declaration, that "by manifestation of the truth, he commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." He knew that in every bosom he had a witness that

^{*} A Sermon delivered before the West Hanover Presbytery, Oct. 25, 1935, at the ordination of the Rev. B. M. Smith. Some remarks in the close of this Sermon, are applicable only to certain latitudes of our country. The temporal support of ministers in some places, is sufficiently liberal.

would secretly testify in his favour. And rising above the repeated assaults of prejudice, envy and malice, he carried his appeal to the throne of conscience, and challenged it, as in the sight of Heaven, to decide upon his Christian integrity. In the commencement of the chapter from which our text is taken, he makes such an appeal to the Thessalonians: -" For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain. But after that, we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated at Philippi, we were bold in our God, to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention." And he then refers it to them to decide whether he had not a good reason for such boldness. "For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile." There was no intrigue-no adroit accommodation of his message to the depraved passions of The simple story of his ministry amongst them is told in the text:-" But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts."

These words suggest to us the following topics of discussion:

- I. THE SOURCE from which the ministry of the gospel is derived.
- II. That the gospel, thus committed to the ministry, is a great TRUST.
- III. THE MANNER in which the gospel ought to be preached.
- IV. THE SANCTION here introduced to secure such preaching.

According to the plan now sketched to govern our

train of thought on this subject, we are first to notice THE SOURCE from which the ministry of the gospel is derived—"But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel."

Here the apostle refers directly to God, as the source from which the ministerial office is derived. And we may learn from the frequency with which he made this reference, that it is a matter of grave moment that the conviction of this truth should be vividly and permanently impressed on the minds of men. It pertains to God alone to institute an order of men to whom shall be committed such a trust as the gospel of his kingdom. God claimed this prerogative in the original institution of the ministry. In the economy of the ancient church, the designation of the priesthood was a matter of direct revelation from heaven, God himself selecting the individuals to office, as in the case of Aaron and his sons-directing the rites of their inauguration, and sanctioning and presiding at the solemnities. Under the former dispensation, the sacredness with which he guarded the holy office from intrusion, is one of the most prominent and striking facts in its history. When Jesus Christ came to establish the order of the new dispensation, he chose the apostles, and formally ordained and consecrated them to the work of the ministry. He gave them, on his own authority, directions to ordain others in every place where the gospel should be embraced, and thus to settle the succession of the ministry till the end of time: for those ministers whom the apostles ordained were directed on the authority of inspiration, in their turn, to invest other faithful men with the same office; so

that the ministry of the gospel now, as much as ever, is in fact derived from God. It is God still, who, through the authority which he has vested in the existing ministry, allows men to be put in trust with the gospel. And to prevent all misapprehension on this subject, he has incorporated in the New Testament the following explicit declaration: "No man taketh this honour to himself, except he be called of God, as was Aaron." It would seem that God had bestowed special care to impress on the minds of men the source from which the ministry is derived, in anticipation of the times which we, in these last days, have fallen upon. There is, at present, a tendency to view the ministry of the gospel in quite a different light from that in which it is presented in the oracles of God-an evident tendency to sever from it that authority and sacredness imparted to it by the consideration that it comes from Jehovah—that it is no human institution which may be submitted to or resisted according to the caprice of men. We are aware that wicked men feel as though they had a personal interest in promoting loose and degrading views of this holy office. It would greatly quiet their tumultuating consciences, could they bring themselves to contemplate the ministry stripped of its sacredness and its sanctions as derived from the God of the universe. It would accord well with the modern spirit of agrarianism and atheistic speculation, to rob the holy office of the solemnities and the glory of its divine origin, and make it a mere secular profession or a part of the imposing machinery of priestcraft. Hence, the virulent attacks which modern infidelity and atheism have made on the ministry-evincing clearly that it is its claims of a derivation from God which makes it a terror to the guilty conscience, and a troublesome barrier in the way of those who are bent upon universal skepticism and licentiousness. Could they, in their own minds, annihilate its relation to the instituting authority of the Eternal, then they know that they could easily break those bands asunder, and cast away those cords by which the living ministry binds them to the fearful forebodings of their final destiny. It is well for us then to recur to this great and primary relation of the gospel ministry—its direct derivation from Jehovah. God has given it a peculiar prominence in his holy word, and he intends that it shall have a commanding prominence in the practical judgments of men. He intends that the world shall respect and reverence this office, which, notwithstanding the unworthiness of some of its incumbents, has the awful sanction and authority of originating in the counsels of his own infinite mind! He intends to write it out as in characters of lightning, that "whosoever resisteth, resisteth the ordinance of God, and he therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but Gop, and shall bear his judgment whosoever he be."

II. We are now prepared, in the second place, to notice that the ministry of the gospel thus committed to men, constitutes an unspeakably great trust. The very fact that it is derived from God, and wears his seal and sanction, imparts to it a character of greatness which attaches to no other trust confided to man. On this we cannot now dwell, but must pass to the consideration of the greatness of this trust, as illustrated, first, by the influence which the ministry exerts on THE INTELLECTUAL CONDITION OF MEN.

A well qualified ministry never has failed, and never will fail to exert a great influence on the intellectual character of society. All who deserve the name of ministers have been the patrons of learning, and the promoters of the mental improvement of mankind. But to say nothing of this, nor of the fact that many of them have been distinguished amongst the literati of their times, and that most of them have acquired a taste for literary pursuits, and possessed an intellectual character whose light could not be hid, the direct exercise of the functions of the ministry must have a great influence on the mind of society. Think, how frequently the exhibitions of the pulpit are brought to bear on the intellect of the people. At least one day in seven is principally devoted to these exhibitions. That, too, a day when the general mind is in a most favourable state for impression-a day of repose from the cares and toils of life, from the absorbing disquietudes of business. when men can pause and allow themselves time to think.

This will make one whole year in every seven devoted to those instructions from the pulpit, which, if they are what they ought to be, will bear evidence of nice investigation, patient thought, close reasoning, profound research; will be of a creditable intellectual character. This, together with the variety of subjects that will be presented, will furnish in every seven years of human life, a great amount of instruction—a vast array of influence on the mass of mind. And when we contemplate the sublime range of those truths embraced in such instructions, and reflect that they are the mighty truths of God—

truths that relate to His being and perfections-to the works of His creation through the universe of matter and of mind-to His relations to man and to the rational creation-to the character, duties, and destinies of our race-truths that indicate a boundless hereafter and point out eternity to man, we may well accord to the ministry of the gospel an influence incalculably great on the intellectual character of our species. All history has fully attested this fact. In Christian nations, the intellectual progress of the people has always been graduated by the degree of intelligence and mental culture found in the ministry. And the long night of the dark ages would never have settled down upon the world, had not "gross darkness" first covered those who officiated at the altars of religion. What an intellectual transformation has been effected amongst a people, in the absence of almost all other causes, by the influence of a learned and able ministry! How many are the instances under such a ministry, of a people waking up from prevalent ignorance, starting into intellectual life, and becoming an intelligent, reasoning, thinking community! What great and lasting revolutions in the empire of mind have owed their origin to a well sustained pulpit! Now when we regard the human mind in its more august attributes as rational and immortal, possessing capabilities of an indefinite expansion and an eternal progression in knowledge, and then think of the ministry of the gospel simply in its influence on the intellectual condition of man, it strikes us as an unspeakably great trust committed to mortals. They who exercise its functions, wield an element of tremendous power on the mental destinies of the race.

But the greatness of this trust will appear, in the second place, from the influence of the ministry on the RELIGIOUS OPINIONS OF MEN. It is true, that no Protestants are dependent exclusively on the teachings of the ministry for their religious opinions. They have free access to the pure oracles of God, and are required by Divine authority to judge for themselves. This is the glory of Presbyterianism. that it claims the right of free inquiry and untrammelled conscience for itself, and accords the same to all others. That officious impudence of infidelity, which arrogates to itself the credit of the establishment and subsequent guardianship of the rights of conscience and religious liberty in this country, ought to be exposed to merited rebuke. Presbyterian argument and eloquence have had much more to do in this matter than infidel disinterestedness and liberality.* But to return from this digression. It is still true, that notwithstanding all the sources of information that lie open to the people, and all the freedom of opinion which they enjoy, the ministry of the gospel docs exert a commanding influence on the views which men take of all the great doctrines of Christianity. This throws upon those who are allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, an unutterably solemn responsibility. They will influence, and mainly form the opinions of a multitude of minds respecting the character of God himself, and

^{*} As a proof of this, it may be proper to remark, that the celebrated bill of religious toleration and rights of conscience, which was passed in the House of Delegates in Virginia, was copied almost verbatim from the memorials on that subject which the fathers of the Hanover Presbytery had previously addressed to that body.

of the great principles of his moral government. The Divine character will appear to those minds just as the ministry present it. If those who sustain the sacred office, have correct, enlarged, and exalted views of the attributes of Jehovah, they will mould the opinions of the people accordingly. The great mass of minds around them will contemplate the infinite God just as their ministers do; so that God has committed to the ministry the amazing trust of making an exhibition of his own character to men, which shall have a decisive control over their opinions. ministry will have a like influence on the opinions of men respecting the moral government of God. If ministers understand the great principles of that government, and exhibit it as a government of righteous law over free moral agents, administered by rewards and punishments-frowning upon sin, and encouraging holiness-investing God with a glorious sovereignty, and binding men to a perfect and perpetual obedience, as their reasonable service, such will be the views, such the religious belief of the people.

The power of the ministry over the opinions of men respecting the great plan of salvation, cannot be contemplated without awe. The chief business of the ambassadors of Christ is to unfold and explain this stupendous scheme. So intimately is this scheme blended with the whole of revelation, and identified with all the immortal interests of man, that our opinions respecting it are of vital moment. To ministers of the gospel, as the authorized expounders of this plan, the people look with unmeasured confidence. On ministers devolves the fearful responsibili-

ty of moulding the opinions of the community respecting this great device of the Godhead; a device which brings out from the retirements of eternity a new attribute of Jehovah, and presents his character to the universe in a new aspect of glory; a device which sheds new light on the laws and administration of his moral kingdom—attracts the scrutiny of angels, and involves the interests and the destinies of the human race through the whole duration of their being. Now the religious opinion of men on a subject of such transcendent importance as this, will be just what the ministry choose to make it—a sound and correct opinion, or "a damnable heresy."

The religious opinions of men respecting their own character and condition, will also be materially influenced by the ministry. Their views of the nature and extent of their depravity-of the intrinsic turpitude and malignity of their sins-of their moral ruin-of their exposure to eternal wrath-of their need of a Saviour-of their obligation to repent and believe the gospel-of the inexcusableness of their impenitence and rebellion-of the unspeakable importance of an immediate interest in all the blessings of salvation; their views on all these matters, of such practical, such vital moment to them, will be moulded-nay, entirely controlled by the living ministry. As a fact in the history of the world, it cannot be disputed but that the ministers of religion have mainly controlled the opinions of mankind on the whole scheme of Christianity. And there are obvious reasons why it has been so, and will be so while such an order of religious functionaries exists. The solemn authority associated with their office-the means of

information to which they have access-the degree of laborious research and investigation which they are enabled to bestow on these subjects beyond what is possible to the great mass of the people—the strong sympathies between their hearers and themselves, resulting from the pastoral relation, and the commanding influence of the living voice in oral instruction, will always put in the hands of the clergy a power of controlling the religious opinions of men, which may be plied with tremendous effect either for edification or destruction. Now if the influence of the ministry on the intellectual condition of society constitutes it a solemn trust, what shall we say of its immeasurable power on the religious opinions of man? If it be an agency of great responsibilities, viewed simply in its influence on the intellectual character, and as having to do with the powers of thought and mental action on ordinary subjects, how shall we estimate the greatness of this trust which puts into the grasp of the ministry the reins of the immortal mind, to guide its movements in the formation of its opinions on all the stupendous subjects of revealed religion!

That the ministry is an unspeakably great trust will appear, in the third place, if we notice its relation as an instrumentality in the conversion of souls and the formation of Christian character. There is no revolution in the dominions of mind so great, or connected with consequences of such magnitude and eternal interest, as the conversion of the soul. This event constitutes the most sublime moral transition that a soul can make—an escape from that awful aggregation of evils, present and future, to which it

is liable by the apostacy—a reinstatement in the favour of God here, and an ultimate exaltation to all those high destinies of its eternal being for which it was originally formed. The instrumentality that stands related to such an event, is an incalculably great and solemn instrumentality. And now what is the influence of the ministry on the conversion of souls? Hath not God settled it in his word, that this is the principal instrumentality which He employs in effecting this wonderful change on the fallen mind? "It hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching" (when men do not render it foolish) "to save them that believe." "We preach Christ crucified, the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Now we undervalue no subsidiary means of converting men, when we affirm, that God has made the ministry the very mainspring in that wonderful mechanism of moral influence by which he is recovering a revolted world to himself. It comes as an embassy from the skies, to a province in rebellion against its righteous moral governor. To the ministry, God has confided the great agency of treating with a guilty world in its disobedience, and of beseeching it to be reconciled to him through the expiation of a Redeemer's blood. This is the instrumentality which he has principally owned in the conversion of the millions that have already been redeemed from amongst men. It is the mighty agency by which God designs principally to convert all the myriads that shall swell the mediatorial triumphs of His Son during the millennium, and till the close of time. A faithful ministry is the world's strongest hold on the hopes and the joys of an eternal heaven. Now,

if we saw a class of men to whom God had committed the influence or instrumentality by which He revolutionizes empires and worlds, producing the most stupendous political and physical changes, we would consider them as having a great and solemn trust. But what shall we think of the men in whose hands is an instrumentality having an immediate connexion with the work of revolutionizing the immortal mind—effecting the most amazing change in the condition and moral relations of the undying soul—raising man from the curse and the woes of his present thraldom in sin, to the bliss and the raptures of an inheritance, a crown and a throne fadeless, and eternal in the heavens? What an unutterably great trust is this!

Next in importance to the conversion of the soul, is the religious character to which it shall be formed, here, in the land of its moral discipline and probation. And we maintain that the ministry has always had, and will always have, the principal influence in forming religious character. The reasons of this are too obvious to need even a passing notice. "Like priest like people" is an adage whose truth is illustrated in every page of the history of God's church on earth. On ministers rests the responsibility of making the religious character of the people what it is. Ministers have the trust committed to them of forming a people for God-of moulding the moral character of the age in which they live -of laying strong hold, by their example, on the power of imitation in the people—of elevating the standard of piety-of urging to "deeds of noble daring," in the cause of a sinking world-of impressing

the mass of Christian mind with the lineaments of true greatness—and of impelling it to high and infinite aspirations after glory, and honour, and immortality.

The guardianship of that character and usefulness which constitutes "the salt of the earth"—the grand conservative principle of fallen, yet social human nature—and the early culture of those august principles of regenerated man, which are to fit him for the adoration and praise, the purity, and love, and untiring benevolence of heaven, are a part of the trust in the hands of the ministry. Who will attempt to compute the greatness of such a trust!

Its greatness will appear once more, if we contemplate the connexion of the ministry with the universal diffusion of the gospel in the world. the ministers of the New Testament, the original command of the Redeemer was given-"Go ve into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." For the fulfilment of this command, which contemplates the mightiest interests of our race, the world has a right to look primarily to the ministry. The responsibility of its fulfilment rests mainly on those who bear the sacred office. Their character and spirit, their instructions and efforts, are inseparably connected with the far extended and universal interests of Messiah's kingdom on earth. Their influence will be felt with decisive effect on the wheels of the Redeemer's triumphant car, as He "rides forth prosperously, conquering and to conquer." In that grand system of influence which God has organized to propagate the gospel universally, the ministry constitutes the heart, whose quick and strong pulsations are to propel the warm currents of spiritual life to the extremities of the globe. God has committed to ministers an agency which tells directly on this stupendous result. There is no other agency located on earth of such momentous bearings. God has principally confided to the hands of ministers the moral interests of the world, till the end of time. Angels have no such trust. They only follow in the train of ministerial influence here on earth,—performing their unseen offices of love to those who are made "the heirs of salvation" by that influence. They have not the dire responsibility of wielding that instrumentality which is connected with the universal diffusion of the gospel—which is yet to rid earth of the curse, and redeem its future millions from the woes of the great moral overthrow in Eden.

Now look at the influence of the ministry on man in all the higher relations and interests of his mortal and immortal being-its influence on his intellectual habitudes and condition—its control over his religious opinions-its instrumentality in the conversion of his soul, and its formative power over his religious character; look at it in its bearings on the universal spread of the gospel-in its amazing agency on those sublime results of millennial glory yet to be realized in our world-and we may add, in its consequences on the eternal joys of the righteous, and the eternal woes of the wicked, to whom it has been "a savour of life unto life or of death unto death," as those consequences shall be unfolded in heaven and in hell for ever, and say, can human language express the greatness of such a trust? Can human hearts sustain themselves under such an exceeding and infinite weight of responsibility? "Who is sufficient for these things?" sometimes wonder that there is a thoughtful mind on

earth willing to take upon itself such a trust. Native strength and mortal spirits would utterly fail and sink beneath it, were it not for that consoling assurance of Jesus Christ—"My grace is sufficient for thee."

III. We now hasten to notice briefly the third general topic of this discourse, viz., THE MANNER in which the gospel thus committed as so sacred a trust, is to be preached. "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even SO we speak." This particle "so," indicates a relation of agreement or proportion with some thing or things which precede. These, you will observe, are the two facts on which we have dwelt—the origin of the ministry as coming from God, and the GREAT trust which it constitutes. The manner of preaching, then, must be such as to correspond with these momentous and over-awing facts. First, the gospel is to be preached under a deep and permanent conviction that the ministerial office is derived from God:-that it is no secular profession-that the minister's commission comes from the court of heaven under the great seal of "the King eternal, immortal, and invisible"—that it cannot be trifled with or prostituted to any unworthy ends, without a degree of guilt that might appal the universe. What a practical effect would the undying conviction of this truth produce on the preaching of the gospel! What a power would be imparted to that gospel, when uttered by one whose mind was absorbed with the weighty thought that he had received his office from the hands of the infinite Jehovah, and whose heart was dilated and throbbing under the felt solemnities of such a commission! How could such a one sink into a heartless round of mere professional service-how could be make his pulpit the place for dealing out dry speculations or stupid commonplace, -while the letters of his commission, written by the finger of God, and burnt in upon conscience by the lightnings of Divine authority, were glittering before the eye of his soul? Secondly,—the gospel is to be preached under a constant and engrossing impression of the greatness of the trust which it constitutes. The ministry must not be regarded as a mere negative agency, that may be executed faithfully or neglected, and the world be but little the better or the worse for it. The gospel must be preached with the conviction that it is one of the mightiest moral elements put in action in this part of God's universe, -that when wielded properly, it will do "the work of tempests in their might," in prostrating the gigantic enmity of the world against God-that it is the ministry of reconciliation, the great organ instituted of God for bringing back this revolted globe to its allegiance to Heaven-that its influence is to be inwoven with all the salutary changes and improvements in the intellectual condition and destinies of the race—that it is to herald in all the great revolutions in the empire of terrestrial minds—that it is to decide the religious character of every age, and to be felt in all the influence which the church of God shall exert on a dying world. Its instrumentality is infinitely more grand and awful than all those mighty agencies of matter that are operating throughout the universe. It is an instrumentality acting with incalculable effect on the moral character, the

hopes and prospects, the relations, interests and eternal destinies of a whole race of God's intelligent subjects-an instrumentality inseparably connected with the exhibitions of Christ's mediatorial glory in the universal extension and splendours of the kingdom of his Messiahship here on earth, and with the effulgence of his crown and his throne for ever in the heavens. Let the gospel be preached under a deep conviction that it constitutes a trust like this-that it ranks first and chief amongst all those vast influences by which the great God is carrying on to its completion the scheme of his eternal mercy to a lost world,-and it can never be a dead letter. gospel thus preached will become a living oraclebefore which every Dagon on earth will fall, and be dashed in pieces. Uttered from a heart palpitating with a sense of the greatness of the trust, it will come forth in the resistlessness of its primitive sway, annihilating the impenitence and rebellion of the world, substituting in their stead "the obedience of the faith," and giving the preparation note of the universal hosannah of earth at its consummated redemption.

A third peculiarity of the manner of preaching the gospel, as stated in our text, is—" Not as pleasing men." No, verily! Such a trust is not to be trifled with, and prostituted to the base purpose of gaining a short-lived popularity, by flattering the vanity and the vices of ungodly men. How can a minister, under the conviction of the origin of his office as derived from Jehovah, and of the greatness of the trust which it involves, dare to degrade the glorious gospel, by withholding or distorting its truths, to

accommodate the prejudices and corrupt passions of men? What has he to do with the perverted taste of the wicked, whose moral element is error? God's command is to proclaim the whole truth, with all the boldness and energy which the view of the facts that have been noticed inspires, -whether sinners will hear or whether they will forbear. He must leave the consequences with God. If the wicked are driven from the sanctuary and beyond the sphere of the influences of the gospel, by a kind yet firm and uncompromising declaration of the whole counsel of God, the responsibility is theirs, not the minister's. And an awful responsibility that will be found to be, in the day of Jesus Christ. He may weep over them, as he doubtless will, and have his hours of anguish of spirit as he marks their downward and accelerated career to perdition, when they have thus severed the tie that bound them to the means of grace; but at the peril of his own soul's eternal salvation, he must not alter nor modify his preaching to please men. There must be no compromise: unblenching fidelity to the letter of his commission - a godly sincerity in preaching the whole truth, witnessed and approved by beholding heaven, must mark all his communications to guilty men. The question how such a doctrine or such a precept will suit unconverted men of intelligence, wealth and influence in his congregation, he must not dare agitate for a moment, lest he fall under that "fear of man which bringeth a snare." O! if every pulpit, since the ministry has been instituted, had teemed with such preaching as this, how much more blessed had this sinning and sorrowful world been to-day!

But whilst the gospel is to be preached "not as pleasing men"-whilst the wicked hate and revile him, is there no one whom the minister, reckless of the world's applause, and fearless and faithful in his proclamation of truth, may desire to please? Yes: for the Apostle adds, as to his manner of preaching, "not as pleasing men, but God." Here is an aim sufficiently exalted and noble to correspond with the sacredness of the office in its divine origin, and in the greatness of the trust which it constitutes. gospel is to be preached with a single eye to pleasing God. Let this be the constant, unvarying aim of the minister. It is an infinitely worthy one. It will have a most happy influence on the character and style of his preaching. Let him have his heart set on the sole object of "commending himself to God in the exercise of the ministry." Let him study, and pray, and write with reference to this end. Let him ask himself, in every duty of his holy office, "How will I appear now in the sight of God?" Let him ask himself in regard to every view of truth which he is about to present, "How does this accord with the mind of God? Will this be pleasing to the God of truth?" Let him ask, in regard to the spirit with which he finds himself approaching the pulpit, "Have I now the mind of Christ?" "Does God see a pleasing harmony between the state of my heart and the deep solemnities of the message I am about to deliver? Is my soul in such a state as to speak the truth in love, in tenderness, in meekness and gentleness, so that I shall please a God of love and sincerity?"

The gospel, preached by one whose eye is fixed

only on the approbation of God, whose heart longs and pants only for the honour that cometh from above, will be no triffing and powerless message. It will be no distorted view of the great truths of revelation; no garbled extracts from "the lively oracles," snatched to serve the mercenary purposes of sectarianism. The gospel, preached with this high aim of pleasing God, will come forth in its native proportions, in its celestial symmetry, and will assert that sway over the hopes and fears and affections of men, which it has sometimes lost by the unsanctified distortions of those who have wrested it to the purposes of a party or a system. It will become "spirit and life;" it will be attended with an unction and an emphasis bespeaking it to be what it is in truth, the word of God and not of man; it will stand out to the world in its own intrinsic and "eternal weight of glory!" Now, in view of these august and glorious characteristics of the ministry and of the manner in which the message of Heaven is to be delivered, by what name shall we designate that creature in priestly garments, who desecrates the pulpit and degrades the gospel, by making it nothing more than the means of his own popularity amongst the wicked?-that creature who can mutilate and pervert the eternal truths of God, and commit the sacrilege of stealing fire from the holy altar to kindle and inflame those unhallowed principles of depraved humanity, which he can turn to his account in the sum of his ill-gotten fame? "O! lives there, heaven, beneath thy dread expanse," a creature whose cup of trembling and of perdition is so ready to overflow as his? Where sleep the lightnings of retributive

wrath, that they break not forth and consume him, while the censer is yet in his hand, in which he is thus burning incense to his own vanity?

IV. But let us inquire for a moment, in the fourth and last place, What is the sanction introduced in the text, to prevent such an abuse, and to secure such a mode of preaching as that which has been described? "Not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our HEARTS." What a sanction! "God, which trieth OUR HEARTS!" All the duties of the ministry, and especially the preaching of the word, are in a peculiar manner done in the open daylight of Jehovah's presence. God's eyes search the hearts, and his eyelids try the reins of ministers every moment. There is no darkness that can hide from his infinite scrutiny, no sanctimonious garb which his gaze cannot pierce. The whole retired interior of the minister's soul is naked, and open to the eyes of Him with whom he will soon have to do. Lo, God hath hedged him about in the sacred office, with an omniscience from which there is no escape! not an idle omniscience, only looking on through curiosity, but an omniscience which is gathering the materials from the busy workings of the minister's heart, for his final trial in the court of heaven. In every walk of ministerial life, on the right hand and on the left, before and behind him, are voices lifted up and pouring on his listening ear the solemn sentence-"God, which trieth our hearts!"-"God, which TRIETH OUR HEARTS!" At every turn of his course there is an index placed, where the finger of God points to the declaration-"This is the way to the bar of justice and to the awards of eternity!" The present

gaze of God's eye, and the future decisions of the great day, are held up perpetually before the mind of the minister, to secure a fidelity in preaching the gospel, which shall triumph alike over the frown or the favour of man, and seek to please God only! O how can a minister of any piety be unfaithful? What compensation will the fading laurels which he has won, by so preaching as to please men, afford him for the present blight of God's displeasure, and the future and final reprobation which will meet him at the bar of judgment? How dim will be the glory of his name, and how feeble the notes of his earthly praise in that great day when the heavens shall gather blackness over him, and the seven thunders of his doom shall break from beneath the eternal throne! The trial of the heart and the tribunal of God are fearful things to any of our race: but of all, most tremendous to the unfaithful minister. God would have these things constantly present and pressing on the minds of his ministers, that they may preach, not as pleasing men, but Him who hath called them with so high and holy a calling. He would have us think of the unspeakable guilt of infidelity to our trust, through the love of that temporary fame which is so soon to be succeeded by the shame and everlasting contempt of the damned. God would have us to know, that of all the transitions in the universe, that from the pulpit to perdition is the most ineffably dreadful! To lay aside the priestly robes and quit the light of the holy altar and be wrapt in devouring fire and banished in the blackness of darkness for ever, is the horrible sublime of immortal agony! Thanks to God-eternal thanks! that in addition to the consideration of his approval and love, he has guarded

ministerial fidelity by the infinite terrors of a sanction like this. O God, in thy boundless mercy, keep all thy ministering servants from betraying the trust which thou hast committed to them, and from becoming, in consequence, the selected few whose future doom will display to the universe the acme of eternal wo.

In conclusion, I would in the first place say to my dear brethren in the ministry-"Suffer the word of exhortation." At all times ours is a great and solemn trust, a weighty and fearful responsibility. But it must be obvious to any reflecting mind, that this trust and responsibility may be greatly enhanced by peculiar circumstances in the history of the church and the world. Such an enhancement is now resulting from the character of "the times that are passing over us, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries," The social, political and religious characteristics of this age, all combine, to mark it on the long line of centuries, as preeminently an era of ministerial responsibility. The widely extended jealousy of ministerial prerogative amongst ungodly men-the general diffusion of knowledge amongst all classes, and, by consequence, the increasing intelligence of the great mass of hearers of the gospel-the latitudinous freedom of opinion and of the press-the amazing ardour and intensity of character forming under the heat and the hammer of political and religious controversy; and the giant efforts of a portion of society, both in the old world and in the new, to throw off the restraints of moral obligation which God has been holding as a balance on the fearful machinery of fallen human nature, to

prevent its own action from working its speedy ruin -all these are tremendous elements, in the midst of which, the ministry of the present day have to live. Now, ministers must possess an intellectual and a moral power that will enable them to subdue these elements, and to render some of them subservient to the great ends of their holy office. This will involve a mightier conflict, and, if successful, a nobler triumph, than that of civilization and the arts over the elements and agencies of nature. To grapple with the intellect and the heart of this generation, under all the variety of violent impulse and maddening movement imparted to them by the character of these times; and to conciliate for the altars at which we minister, the respect and veneration of the intelligent, thinking, independent, restless, active mass of the great community,-will make a demand on ministerial strength, almost without a parallel in the annals of Christianity. The relative degree of intellectual and moral forces, between the preacher and the people, is fast changing. The average amount of ministerial attainment necessary to success half a century since, would not avail at present, much less would it meet the hastening exigencies of the future. Success cannot long be expected, without elevating the standard both of knowledge and of piety amongst the clergy themselves. We say both of knowledge and of piety. The latter, however indispensable, (would that there were sevenfold more of it than there is) will not serve to the exclusion of the former. The day has well nigh passed when our pulpits can be sustained and command respect by dealing out a kind of colloquial piety, which aims at com-

municating no knowledge, though it has sometimes with great self-complacency been dignified with the title of "practical preaching." God has promised to his church pastors who shall feed his people with knowledge; and until ministers do so, they will lack one great element of the power over a sinful world. Until they do so, the impetuous cravings of man's immortal mind will drive him headlong upon other sources of intellectual excitement and gratification. Mere desultory declamation, though uttered with an angel's eloquence and a seraph's ardour, will not feed God's people with knowledge. And, brethren, how we are ever to effect this without pains-taking and persevering efforts to increase our own stores of knowledge, is a problem of no easy solution. How we are, with the present average of ministerial attainments, to meet the growing demands of the popular mind in our own times, I know not. God has given us a position of fearful distinction in this day. One thing is certain, if we would retain the ground that we now occupy, our sacred calling must become pre-eminently the darling pursuit of our lives—the great, absorbing, master-passion of our souls. Secular concerns and secular interests must be regarded as only secondary, and rendered strictly subservient to the high purposes of our ministry. We can no longer divide our time between the cares of life and the functions of our holy office, giving to the former the larger half, and yet expect to sustain ourselves in respectability and usefulness as ministers of the gospel. The world is rushing onward, with a momentum that will not permit us any longer to indulge such an expectation. In every department of human

activity, men are driving like Jehu, "furiously." And, relying on God, we too must be able and ready in turn to mount the car and take the reins, or we shall be crushed in the dust beneath the tremendous roll of its wheels.

If we fail to keep pace with and go before the increasing intelligence of our day-if we fail to have a hand in plying the incalculable power of the press -if we fail of our influence in the present movements on the subject of popular education, and in the means of diffusing useful knowledge-if we fail in securing our full proportion of the intellectual treasures of our times, it will be a far more disastrous failure than the fabled catastrophe of Phaeton. when intrusted with the chariot of the sun. The physical distress fancifully depicted of the earth in that case and its personification at lifting its parched hands in imploring importunity to the gods, but faintly indicates, nay, utterly fails to suggest the spiritual disaster that would result from the displacement or obscuration of those "stars" which the great Head of the church holds up as her light. O if we fail to perform our lofty circuit, what "a horror of great darkness" will settle down upon our globe! While it is yet noon, the evening shadows of eternal death will stretch over every hill and valley, and on every mountain and plain, presaging a midnight of gathering gloom upon the hopes and the immortal interests of man. Brethren, -our hearts cannot but tremble in view of our present condition and responsibilities as ministers of the everlasting gospel. Let us, then, bring these hearts, trembling and aching, to the cross of our divine Master, and hold them there till they are melted and begin to expand with the constraining love

of Christ—till faith grasps with both hands upon his promise and his power—till our souls are fired with a portion of his self-consuming zeal;—and then let us return to the duties of our high calling, determined, through Christ strengthening us, that we will give ourselves wholly to the work—that we will make full proof of the influence of an intelligent, holy, faithful ministry, in removing the sins and the sorrows of a dying world.

Finally. In the light of this subject, Christians may see how they ought to estimate the ministry. To esteem ministers very highly in love for their work's sake, is a duty enforced not less by the nature of their office, than by the divine authority which enjoins it. The obligations of Christians to their ministers are unspeakably tender and solemn. The sympathy which they owe to him whose office is one of such trials and such infinite responsibilities, is a deep, permanent, generous, overflowing sympathy. The prayers which they owe him are sincere, fervent, importunate prayers, like those which they offer for their own eternal salvation. The cooperation which they owe him, is a cordial, prompt, constant, efficient co-operation. The temporal support which they owe him, is a liberal, ample, freewill offering, as though they gave it unto the Lord, and not to man.

Christians,—have you fulfilled these high obligations to your ministers? For their fulfilment God will hold you bound to abstain from theft and murder. O, I fear that your neglect, your great neglect here, has laid up fearful materials for your future account at God's tribunal. Look at the minister of the gospel in the light in which he is exhibited

in this discourse, (and that is the true light in which you ought to contemplate him,) see, as respects his office, whether God's estimate and yours are not widely different? Is he the man whom you may reasonably regard as possessing a most enviable leisure,—his office being a mere sinecure? Is he the man whom you think, amidst all the corroding cares and exhausting efforts of his ministry, ought to "labour, working with his own hands," for as much of the meat that perisheth as will barely support him, while he feeds you with that which endureth unto eternal life? Is he the one whom you regard as a kind of educated, splendid pauper, who is to be fed with the crumbs thrown from the careless hand of charity,-and to think himself well off, if he is not grudged even these, as a value received, for which he renders no equivalent? "O shame, where is thy blush?" for there are professing Christians in our own land, in the nineteenth century, who participate, measurably, in the infinite meanness and guilt of such an estimate of the holy ministry. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen," in this humiliating and painful affirmation. If it be not so, why are some ministers, in the midst of a comparatively wealthy population, driven, by dint of temporal want, to the occupation of teaching or of farming, and thus consigned to a process of official dwindling and deterioration, which seems, amongst the very people whose conduct has produced this result, to justify them in their low estimate of the ministry. If it be not so, what means that heaven-daring dishonesty which some feel at perfect liberty to practise, in withholding the sum

which they have subscribed with their own hand for the minister's support, while they feel obligated to pay the bill of the merchant tailor and of the shoemaker; thus leaving the world to draw the easy and obvious inference, that those who clothe the body are justly entitled to their pay, whilst he who wears out the best energies of his being to clothe their immortal souls in the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, renders them no service for which they feel obligated to give him a compensation! If professing Christians have not an improper and low estimate of the ministry, why is it that some of you who are fathers and have sons that hope in Christ for salvation, and consider themselves bought with the infinite price of his blood, are unwilling that those sons should select the holy ministry as their profession? The implication is, that you regard it as an office hardly sufficiently honourable to comport with the family caste and reputable standing of your sons—an office which affords them no facilities for those distinctions to which you hope to see them rise-an office, in truth, whose incumbents, of all other men, are the beneficiaries of a charity more peculiarly gratuitous than that bestowed on the tenants of an almshouse! You would rather see your sons, under all the mighty obligations which regenerating grace has imposed on them to be devoted to Christ, pursuing a career of worldly glory in the profession of the law, or of medicine, or of politics, than a career of usefulness in the ministry, which would exalt them hereafter to shine as the sun and the stars in the firmament of God for ever! Christian brethren,-"these things ought not so to be,"

That ungodly men who feel the rebuke of that "awful goodness" which the ministry sometimes presents in the character of its best functionaries—that the wicked whose consciences writhe under the faithful exhibitions of God's truth in exposing the magnitude and malignity of their sins, and who feel towards the ministry as the demoniacs amongst the tombs felt toward the Son of God, as though it were instituted "to torment them before the time"-that these should depreciate the holy office, and revile its incumbents as hireling priests, growing rich on the money which they extort from the superstitious fears of the people, is not at all surprising. A faithful, pious ministry, is doubtless greatly in their way. It is as the angel with flaming sword, which met Balaam in his keen career after the wages of unrighteousness. It sometimes causes their "foot to be crushed against a wall," and sends them wrathful, vet halting, along their downward course. But that those who profess to owe their hopes of eternal life to the instrumentality of the ministry—who profess to regard it as the divinely instituted means of their sanctification—that any of such should estimate the sacred office so low as to give the least countenance to the sentiments of the ungodly on this subject, is truly amazing! Beware, professing Christians, of thus adding to the griefs of him who has trials and sorrows enough, after all your esteem and kindness to him, to make him "weep between the porch and the altar." For these things, where they continue to exist, God will not fail to visit the community with the awful judgment of "removing the candlestick out of his place," and of making that spot a

"land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death without any order, and where the light is darkness!" The kingdom of God shall be taken from that community, and given to one that shall bring forth the appropriate fruits. Beloved Christian brethren, gather round your ministers with an increasing interest and an increasing estimate of the infinite value of their holy calling. The times in which you live imperiously require this at your hands. They now need all the influence which you can afford, and this generation may not pass away till they yet need more than the Christian community have hitherto accorded to them. To some of them, it is a day of trouble and of tumult, in the ecclesiastical connexions to which they belong-a day of internal strife, whose issues on the great interests of religion in this country no man is competent at present to predict. "Without also are fightings." The great, growing, irreligious populace are no idle and uninterested spectators of these "divisions of Reuben!" For the last ten years there has been an increasing bond of union forming between the wicked of all classes and creeds. The strength resulting and accumulating from this union is yet to be expended in a terrible conflict with the virtue and common Christianity of our country. And, as we have no religious establishment in this land, it is very obvious that ministers are likely to become the centre to which the wicked, thus banded together, will direct the mighty shock of their aggregated forces. Cling then to your ministers, and to the altars at which they serve. Leave them not to struggle and to weep alone. Let your very souls cleave unto

them as they approach the fiery trial and the fearful conflict that awaits them! O, sustain them with all the sympathy, and all the counsels, and all the prayers, and all the co-operation that you can bring to their aid. By all the trials, and sorrows, and solemn responsibilities of the holy office-by all the portentous signs of the times in reference to the ministry -by all the momentous bearings of its influence on the highest interests of the race for two worlds-by all that you owe to its instrumentality in the eternal redemption of your souls-by the love of Jesus which instituted this office-by all the honour of God, and of Christ, and of the Spirit, involved in its perpetuity on earth, I beseech, I conjure you "esteem your ministers very highly in love for their work's sake;" and, at the peril of meeting the result of your delinquency at the bar of God, withhold not an effort necessary to augment their influence and facilitate their success in prosecuting the sublime ends of their heavenly calling.

SERMON IX.

DISASTROUS EFFECTS OF LITTLE SINS IN CHRISTIANS.

Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour; so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.—Ecclesiastes x. 1.

THE love of reputation is natural to men. God has implanted this love in the human heart to subserve a benevolent purpose in the present scene of our being. And the individual who has so far perverted this part of his original constitution, as to feel no regard for the good opinion of the wise and the virtuous, is prepared to become the pest of the community, and the perpetrator of the foulest deeds of darkness. To the native desire of the individual for the esteem of others, may be referred much of that courtesy and common kindness which diffuse their blessings over the various circles of society. But no man, in this country especially, is born to the inheritance of a good name. He must merit it by his real or supposed virtues, before it will be awarded to him. And it is not a rare or solitary act of goodness, however imposing, that will secure to the individual that "good name, which is better than precious ointment." As it is with care and caution

that the apothecary compounds and prepares his precious perfume, so a fair reputation can only be obtained by combining in their just proportions, and exhibiting in their fulness and harmony, those elements of character that meet the approbation of the better part of society. But while such is the difficulty and delicacy of establishing a character for wisdom and honour, it may be easily lost, utterly lost, without destroying all or any of its great and prominent qualities. "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a bad savour "-yet these flies bear but an exceeding small proportion to the whole substance of the ointment in which they are lodged. Character, like perfume, then, may be destroyed without a destruction of all its principal component parts. Let but a little folly attach to him who is in reputation for wisdom and honour, and it may utterly ruin his influence. This is the truth exhibited for our contemplation in the text.

The object of the remarks that follow shall be—first, TO NOTICE SOME EXEMPLIFICATIONS OF THE TRUTH, THAT COMPARATIVELY TRIFLING DEFECTS DESTROY THE REPUTATION AND INFLUENCE OF A PROFESSING CHRISTIAN—and secondly, TO INQUIRE INTO THE REASONS OF THIS.

I. First, then, we are to notice some exemplifications of the truth, that comparatively trifling defects destroy the reputation and influence of a professing Christian.

Every professor of religion is at first, by his very profession, in reputation for wisdom and honour. He is supposed to have taken a wise step, to have assumed a lofty stand. He has claimed connexion,

intimate alliance, with the Source of all honour and moral excellence. Must be then be guilty of some flagrant violation of the divine law, before he can lose his character and influence?—No; a little folly will destroy them both. He may not break the Sabbath, nor swear profanely, nor steal, nor be chargeable with falsehood, nor with gross and palpable injustice, nor with habitual neglect of the social and secret worship of God. He may not be impure or intemperate, a railer or false accuser, an unruly or insubordinate member of the church. He may neither be quarrelsome nor insolent with his neighbours; and yet he may have that in his character which will as effectually destroy his influence as though he were guilty of much greater enormities. Let him be reckless and imprudent in the minor points of Christian conduct. Let him heedlessly or wilfully postpone the claims of justice, even in little matters. Let him have a little of self-confidence, and a meddlesome forwardness-some share of self-will and unyielding pertinacity of opinion—some irascibility of temper that cannot brook contradiction, or bear to be overborne by the opinions of a majority of his peers, without throwing him off his balance and causing him to speak unadvisedly with his lips;any one of these may be amply sufficient to destroy his influence, though that charity that hopeth all things and believeth all things, may both hope and believe still that he is a Christian. Or take a professor of religion, otherwise irreproachable, but who has the unhappy habit of giving the highest colouring to his representations, of using great exaggeration, of making loose and somewhat distorted statements, of taking a little poetic license in the narration of facts; and though no court, ecclesiastical or civil, could convict that man of palpable lying, yet there is a fly in the ointment, and the sayour is offensive. The man's Christian character and influence are a perfect nullity. Take another, in other respects unblameable, but who is known in his business transactions to go just as far as the letter of the law will permit in getting the best of a bargain-who evinces a peculiar shrewdness, not to say cunning, in calculating the bearings on his own interest of certain unsuspected legal phrases in a contract, and who can satisfy his own conscience, and attempt to justify to others the advantage he has thus gained, by saying, that it is perfectly legal-that the other contracting party acted voluntarily and with his eyes open. Now, though such a one can neither be convicted by a church session nor a civil court, of illegal bargaining or dishonesty, yet his reputation as a professing Christian, and his influence in the church of God, are somewhat worse than a cipher! Again: suppose an individual, who is not chargeable with any approximation to overreaching in his dealings with others. and whose reputation is respectable in the eyes of men generally, except that it is known that he loves exceedingly to retain what he has honestly acquired, irrespective of any demands of God or man on his substance: let it be known that he always receives applications for contributions with a mal-grace: that, when the object presented for his liberality is one of unquestioned propriety and benevolence, he admits it, but fills his mouth with objections: that he will resort to apologies and excuses, the weight of which

it is to be suspected he does not himself feel: let it be known that to all questions of this kind he has a set of negative answers—answers which show that he clings inordinately to his gold-that he loves it in itself, instead of as the means of doing good to a dying world; that he is somewhat, at least, inclined to avarice and covetousness; and though this be not regarded as a disciplinable offence by the church-(and I do not see why it should not be, for the New Testament declares it to be IDOLATRY;) yet what is that professor's character worth in the estimation of an enlightened Christian community? Worth just as much as his treasures will be to him, when God takes away his soul. And even where there is not such an approach to downright covetousness-where there is no such approximation to that "love of money, which is the root of all evil "--no such idolatrous attachment to riches, yet it is possible for the individual to be guilty of a littleness of soul-a parsimonious meanness and management in pecuniary affairs, that will as certainly undermine and destroy the character and influence of a professing Christian, as avarice and covetousness in their grossest forms.

Let us now contemplate a professing Christian, free from all these defects of which we have spoken, but prone to a certain unbecoming levity of spirit. Such a one may not attend theatres, operas, balls, or dancing and dashing parties. He may frequent no haunts of dissipation and mirth—nay, he may not be habitually found in the society of the trifling and the thoughtless. But there may be a certain effort at dress and fashionable appearance, a certain love of attracting attention and winning admiration, a pre-

vailing desire to be witty, a love of showing off a little, unrepressed gayety and levity of spirit, a disposition to trifling and puerile conduct in the absence of customary restraint, moments of frothy conversation and vain jestings, and some leanings occasionally to very thoughtless companionship. Now, though the individual to whom these things attach, never proceeds to such lengths as might at all make him liable to the formal discipline of the church, yet what effect have they on his reputation and influence as a professor of religion? It is true, they leave him in his place, untouched by discipline as a member of the church, but the fragrance of his good name they have not only destroyed, but caused that name to send up an odour highly offensive to all that is grave, dignified, and consistent in piety.

Or suppose an individual to be at a great remove from all that is gay and trifling, suppose him to be serious and punctual in all external observances, sufficiently grave in all his intercourse with the world, possessing a moral character of no positive faultiness, somewhat zealous and enterprising in benevolent efforts: yet let him be inclined to a murmuring, restless, dissatisfied spirit, rather disposed to censoriousness, mostly or always differing in opinion respecting the most simple matters from the majority around him, greatly alive to the defects and blemishes of others, complaining that every thing in the church and the world seems to be going wrong, and disposed to innovation and change, provided it be of his own dictation. Now in all this he may do nothing really worthy of disciplinary stripes. He may not in the judgment of the candid bring his own personal piety

into doubt, and yet his salutary influence as a Christian is as utterly destroyed as though he had been guilty of some heinous offence: there are at least enough of "dead flies" in the ointment to destroy its fragrance, if not to cause it to send forth a positively bad odour.

We may now examine the effect of a little folly in one who is in reputation for wisdom and honour as a father or head of a family. Such a one, in order to lose his character and influence, need not be destitute of natural affection, he need not be a stern and arbitrary tyrant in the domestic circle, imposing the iron yoke of his despotism on the weak and unoffending necks of his wife and children, and inflicting brutal violence on those whom God and nature require him to protect and cherish. Nor, on the other hand, need he neglect all discipline and yield up the reins, and leave his children to run without restraint in the course which their ardent and wayward desires may dictate. He may not allow them to spurn his authority in the graver matters of their duty, to break over the restraints of an external morality, and violate the Sabbath, or profane the name of God, or steal, or utter falsehood, or frequent places of gaming, and drunkenness, and lewdness, and riot. He may not permit them to offer a direct disobedience to any of his positive and prompt requirements as a father, and yet there may be a little folly attached to him in this relation which will destroy his influence and ruin his children, as inevitably as more glaring delinquencies. Let him fail to exercise a vigilant inspection over the forming habits of his children; let him yield his authority, contrary to his own con-

viction of right, to the persuasive importunity of his child; let him connive at the child's ingenuity to avoid collision with his known will in a given case, and yet to carry its own point; let him sometimes accept a partial and reluctant obedience; nay, let him even hold the reins of his parental government with an unsteady hand, and what will be the effect on his reputation as a Christian father. and what the influence on his children? The evidence of his folly, however small it may appear to himself, will come before the public as soon as its effects have ripened into maturity in the character of his children. Whatever may be his other excellencies, the world will not respect him as a judicious Christian father. His little folly is sufficient effectually to destroy the fragrance of that good name, which attaches to the exalted character of a discreet, consistent, Christian father. And it will equally destroy his influence on his own children. Having learned that they may, in some instances, succeed in avoiding a cordial and unqualified obedience to his reasonable requisitions—that they may carry their point by management and persuasion, their reverence for his parental authority is gradually weakened, the strong ties of filial respect and fear become loosened, the charm that bound them in implicit obedience to a father's will and wishes is at length dissolved, and the progress to insubordination, recklessness of all restraint, and to ultimate ruin, is neither slow nor uncertain. The destruction of character and hopes amongst the children of professing parents, is never effected by great and crying parental delinquency. A "little folly" in those

who are in reputation for wisdom and honour as Christian parents, hath done this! "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

Once more: the truth of our text is strikingly exemplified in the case of some ministers of the gospel. The more delicate the perfume, the more easily destroyed by a small ingredient of an offensive kind. So the higher and more sacred the reputation for wisdom and honour, the more easily ruined by a To lose his character and influence, it is not necessary for the minister to be infected with gross heresy, or to be guilty of gross immorality; he need not be chargeable with indiscretions as palpable as those that mar the character of ordinary Christians. Nay, he may preach the truth eloquently and fervently; he may have a general honesty and uprightness of intention; some degree of sincere desire to do good. He may be laborious in his official duties; an example of liberality to the poor, and to all objects of benevolence; industrious and careful in his studies; attentive in his visitations to the sick, and to his flock generally: but let him be known as a man of somewhat rash and imprudent temperament, or as possessing a hauteur and ill-judged independence, wounding to the feelings of others; or let him be prone to occasional levity, excessive fondness for anecdote, and an unrestrained indulgence of his sense of the ludicrous; or let him be known as a little inclined to be insidious and managing; a little disposed to the compromising and turning of a merely secular policy; somewhat desirous of the praise of men, or at least a little too sensitive respecting his own popularity: any one of these, however

small, if persisted in till it become habitual, will undermine and ultimately blast his reputation, and blot out his name from the records of a respectable and useful ministry. How many men of talents are at this day wasting and waning under defects entirely too trifling to be made the objects of an ecclesiastical process, or even to bring their personal piety into doubt. Dead flies are, however, in the ointment, and its original purity and fragrance only serve to enhance their offensive odour. The very transparency of the consecrated vessel that contains them, serves to magnify those impertinent intruders in the eyes of the spectator, and prepares him to receive the greater offence from their ill savour. It may well make the serious mind to tremble, and the sensitive heart to sink in anguish, to think how a little folly may utterly destroy the character and influence of him who is in reputation for wisdom and honour as a minister of Jesus Christ.

II. Let us now, in the second place, inquire into some of the reasons why it is that a little folly will thus destroy the character and influence of a professing Christian.

I. One reason of this is, that the Christian, by his profession, creates large expectations respecting his character. His profession lays claim to all those exalted and ennobling attributes which belong to regenerated human nature. He professes to have experienced a great moral change, so radical in its influence on his being, that the sacred scriptures denominate it a "a new creation"—a "being born again"—a "passing from death unto life"—from "darkness to light"—from sin to holiness. He professes to be

the friend of God, the disciple of Jesus Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost. He affirms by his profession that he has solemnly "renounced the hidden things of dishonesty;" that he has thrown off the spirit and maxims and customs of a guilty world, as no longer to interfere with, or influence his conduct; that he is actuated by a higher and holier principle by that supreme benevolence to God, and that impartial love to man which the sacred scriptures require; that he has adopted rules of life so gloriously pure and rigid, that they require him, under the most solemn sanctions, to "abstain from all appearance of evil." In a word, that the great law of his renewed nature is strenuously to aim to be holy even as God is holy. All this, and other specifications that might be added, are involved in a public profession of religion. Is it not natural, that such a profession should create large expectations in the world respecting the character of him who makes it? He gives an illustrious hostage to public opinion-a pledge that he will sustain no ordinary reputation for wisdom and honour. The world have accordingly high expectations; and, forgetting that the Christian does not profess present perfection, they regard him as though he did. Now where there is such a high profession on the one hand, and such enlarged expectations on the other, it is manifest that a comparatively trifling defect attaching to such a character, will be as the dead flies in the ointment of the apothecary. The same obliquity which, in the case of one not in reputation for wisdom and honour, would pass wholly unobserved, will be amply sufficient in the case of the Christian to destroy his character and influence.

Nor does it matter that the world are unreasonable in their requirements, and expect too much. We must take human society as it actually is, not as it should be, when we are examining the influence of trifling defects on the reputation of the Christian. If men are unrighteously severe in condemning the Christian for a little folly, it is not the less a fact that his reputation with them is destroyed, and his influence neutralized and lost. The want of charity in the world to overlook his slightest faults, ought only to prove a more powerful stimulus to him to avoid the very appearance of evil.

2. A second reason why comparatively trifling defects blast the Christian's reputation, is to be found in the fact, that most men judge, whether right or wrong, that little things often furnish a clew to the general character. That this is true in many instances cannot be doubted. Hence the adage, that "straws indicate the current of the ocean." And it would be true in regard to a little folly in the professing Christian. were there not certain counteracting influences in the very principles of his renewed nature. Were there no humiliation in view of the least perceptible folly that attaches to him; no sincere penitence on its account before God; no resistance offered to it: no habitual resolves and efforts in Divine strength to overcome it, then that little defect would furnish a proper clew to his whole character for piety. But the world sees not the operations of this counteracting influence. The Christian's folly is before the world, openly; but the deep humiliation which it occasions, is an exercise of his soul in retirement. The tears he sheds over it are wept in secret, and

seen by none but the omniscient eye; the resistance he opposes to it is amongst the secrets of his own heart: the resolves and efforts which he makes to conquer and to root it out from amongst the habitudes of his soul, are not matters of public observation. Hence the men of the world take the little folly which they see attached to him as the proper data on which to form their estimate of his whole character. All his excellencies are thus tarnished, and go for a thing of naught. They attempt to explain them away, or account for their existence in the professing Christian, through his hypocrisy, or his love of the praise of men, or it may be his fear of falling under the censure of the church, or his desire to promote by such fair appearances some secular and selfish end. Thus, it being assumed that these visible though small defects are a proper clew to his general character, that character is destroyed, and the Christian's influence worse than lost, in the judgment of such men, by a little folly.

3. A third reason of this fact is, that the world abounds with that envy which is anxious to reduce all excellencies of character to its own level.

There are some men who live only to be tormented by the good name of others. Of small capacities and very stinted virtues, they are nevertheless gigantic in the single desire of fame. Popular esteem is their idol. With the love of this as their ruling passion, when they find themselves consigned to an unnoticed mediocrity, their disappointment and chagrin speedily distils the bitterest envy. If genius or moral worth rises within their view, and soars and sheds glory from its wings—like the crows in pursuit

of the eagle, they must need chatter at it, though it is far aloft, beyond their range, on its shining way toward the sun. There are those who consider all others that are in better reputation than themselves, as their rivals and natural enemies. No matter what species of excellence it may be for which the individual is distinguished, it is sufficient to secure for him their envy and hatred. These passions burn like the smothered fires of the volcano, and struggle for an opportunity to break forth and blacken the reputation of that individual, till it is of the same hue as their own. Such men have adopted the equality principle in regard to the characters of others, and are determined never to rest, till they have done what they can to reduce them to a level with their own.

Now as envy cannot exist without some materials, fabricated or existing in fact, you may judge, my hearers, with what avidity it seizes on the trifling defects of the Christian, and commences its diabolical work of ruining his good name. But for these defects it would lack all the materials that could afford any probability of success to its infernal machinations. With this little folly in him who is in reputation for wisdom and honour, as the basis, envy can construct its stories, throw out its surmises and insinuations, and ruin a name otherwise better than precious ointment. While then our world is the theatre of the dark and guilty passion of envy, this will afford one reason why comparatively trifling defects in the Christian, will serve to destroy his character and influence.

4. A fourth and last reason of this may be found

in the fact, that wicked men hope by magnifying these comparatively trifling faults of the Christian, and injuring his reputation, to quiet their consciences in view of their own grosser sins and deformities.

There are some men who fear no disturbance to their consciences so much as that excited by the consistency and pre-eminent holiness of the lives of Christians. They can hear the finest theories of religion, and listen to the most overwhelming evidences of its truth, and still strive to persuade themselves and others that it is but a theory, not capable of being actually reduced to practice. They may be warned by all the terrors of the Lord, of the wickedness of their way, and of the woes in which it will terminate, and yet if they see no marked difference in character between themselves and those who profess religion, their consciences can still repose in quiet. But if the holy and unblameable life of a Christian-one whose character is as free from imperfection as even the world can reasonably expect it to be-throws its light in upon their darkness, conscience is troubled. These men are then afraid that there is such a distinction of moral character as the Scriptures assert, between the righteous and the wicked. And if there be, they know that their case, while they continue what they are, is hopeless and deplorable beyond expression. To silence conscience then, they must do one of two things-either repent and be converted, and become holy, or endeavour to persuade themselves that there is not much difference between the character of those who are highest in reputation for piety, and their own. The latter is the easiest, and

the most grateful to the depraved heart, and withal the least humbling to its native pride. Accordingly such men seize on the little folly connected with the Christian, though it be but as the spot on the disk of the sun, to shield the eyes of conscience from the tormenting splendours of full-orbed Christian cha-They withdraw their attention from all his preponderating excellencies, and fix it strongly on his most trifling defects. These they exaggerate and magnify, and make the foundation of more sweeping conjectures and suspicions, till, through the deep deception of their own hearts, they persuade themselves, and would fain persuade others also, that the best Christian is after all little if any better than themselves. Thus wicked men feel as though their peace of conscience were staked on the success of their efforts to make a little folly in the professing Christian the means of destroying his character and influence. How effectually they succeed, the bleeding cause of Christ in our world abundantly shows.

And, my dear Christian friends, it is vain for us to complain of such a constitution of things. God permits it, to impose on us the necessity of the highest possible attainments in holiness of which our present condition is capable. God holds up all these reasons, which we have been exposing, to show us why it has been and always will be true, that as "dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour, so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour." A truth big with terror to the thoughtless, uncircumspect Christian, as it is with infinite disaster to the interests of piety in the world.

We may infer from this subject, then, the obligation of Christians to be peculiarly circumspect, in regard to things that may seem as trifles compared with the more prominent and imposing parts of Christian character.

My Christian friends, it will not suffice for us to be careful that we are not guilty of any direct immorality—that no one shall be able to lay palpable and flagrant sin at our door. The restraints of society, and our regard to public opinion, will ordinarily save us from any thing gross and revolting in our moral conduct. It is not here that we are to double the watch, and fortify the walls of our religious character. The towers and battlements may all be stable and strong, while the wicket-gate to the heart may be unbolted and ready to open at the touch of the enemy. It is against the little obliquities of Christian conduct that we are most sedulously to guard. here that the sternest circumspection is required. We have seen that our religious character and influence can be as effectually destroyed by a little folly, as by more flagrant crimes. We have seen that there are many reasons why this must be so. We have seen that the very profession of the Christian, on the one hand, and the exorbitant expectations of the world on the other; that the habit of judging of general character by little acts; that a levelling envy. and a desire of quieting conscience amongst the wicked, by exaggerating the faults of Christians, are all operating as so many causes to take advantage of a little folly in him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour, for the destruction of his good name and influence in society. What then is the manifest and

imperious duty of Christians thus situated? Verily, that they walk circumspectly in little things-not as fools, but as wise to foresee the fatal consequences to their reputation if they neglect this duty. With what care ought they to set themselves to the task of watchfulness in this respect! Conscience is feebler, less sensitive and wakeful, in proportion to the estimated littleness of these defects, in themselves considered, and without reference to the mighty sweep of their destructive power on Christian character and influence. How necessary then to stir up our vigilance and circumspection, by looking at the inevitable consequences of what may be softened by the name of mere frailties or failings! They will in the end, if not arrested, work out a destruction of our Christian reputation and influence, as certain and deep, and dreadful as the most palpable immoralities could do. They will leave us as mere spots in the church's feasts of charity-as clouds without rain, to shut out the moral sunshine and dews of heaven from this parched and barren world. In themselves they may be little things, but in their destructive power on our good name, they "do the work of tempests in their might." "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, be sober, be vigilant, gird up the loins of your minds, see that ye walk circumspectly," in that which is least as well as in that which is greatest—remembering that the world waits to receive its deepest convictions of the purity of your conscience, the strength of your religious principle, and the influence of the love and the fear of God on your hearts, from your scrupulous regard to LITTLE duties.

Finally—We may remark from this subject, how strange it is that professing Christians should be so insensible to the guilt of what are deemed LITTLE sins.

If the preacher inveighs against profaneness, or intemperance, or lewdness, or Sabbath-breaking, or theft, or fraud, or falsehood, or any of the grosser crimes, they are willing to hear him, and to shudder for that professor of religion to whom aught so flagrant can be applicable. They think that if they were in his condition they would be overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, and would give up all hone. But when the man of God dwells on the blemishes, or the petty defects of their Christian character, there is scarcely enough of sensibility in their consciences to keep their attention to the subject. They look away from these to the more prominent and imposing excellencies of their character, as abundantly counterbalancing them. Why, brethren, why such torpor of conscience amongst Christians about little sins? If they are sufficient to destroy your good name, and your Christian influence on a dying world, why may they not suffice to put conscience in an agony till penitence through the blood of Jesus remove them from the soul? What is your existence worth to God, or to his universe, when you are as salt that has lost its savour-when you are stript of the reputation and the influence of a Christian? What though you may get to heaven at last, and be "saved so as by fire?" Will you have fulfilled the high responsibilities of your standing on earth-your connexion with mortals? Did God design that on your way to immortality you should be a mere negative thing-should exert no permanent goodly in-

fluence? And vet such must be the certain result of little sins indulged. And does it constitute any palliation, that you barter your name and influence at a price so small? Oh, can conscience sleep over those little things, which yet are so great in their consequences as to disrobe you of the exalted attributes of a consistent Christian, and throw you as a dead weight on the struggling energies of the church, and finally dismiss you from the world as little better, perhaps, than a cumberer of the ground! My dear Christian friends, wherever else conscience may sleep, oh, let it not do this over little sins. it wake up, and weep, and lead to fervent, agonizing prayer, till, through abounding grace, you may stand confessed before the world, "blameless, and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke."

SERMON X.

THE WISE RECKONING OF TIME. A NEW-YEAR'S SERMON.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.—Psalm xc. 12.

THE course of time has ever been the subject of sublime and melancholy musing. The sacred writer, in the context, introduces this topic by some of the most tender and beautiful imagery. Whether the lapse and vicissitudes of time would bring upon an unfallen spirit that impression of poetic sadness which we feel, it is not easy to determine. Did the mighty current of years roll on over a sinless world, it would probably associate to the minds of the inhabitants nothing but images and anticipations of brightness and glory. But upon apostate man, time, in its flight, casts a deep shadow from its wings, and awakens emotions of strange and undefinable sadness. The great changes that have been effected, the decay and ruin of the proudest monuments of human power, the wreck of generations gone by, and the unrevealed mysteries of the future, fill the mind with associations mournfully sublime. How little and impotent does man appear, as he views himself, borne along on the tide of years, as the leaf on the bosom of the mighty river, without any power to arrest or direct its course. We might, my hearers, to-day yield ourselves up to mere sombre musings on this subject; but the psalmist has shown us "a more excellent way" of improving the swiftly passing moments. "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." What a suitable prayer in view of our hurrying existence here, and of its infinite and enduring issues hereafter. If life is so brief, so fleeting, oh teach us, thou Author of our being, so to estimate what remains, as to make of every moment the best possible use.

Brethren, on this first Sabbath in the new year, may not we, with great propriety, make this prayer of the psalmist our own? "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." As Christians, then, how shall we make a wise computation of time? Such a computation will require us to have some reference to the present circumstances of society, and to the prospects opening on the world.

I. I remark, then, first, that we ought, as Christians, to appreciate the opportunities presented of making great progress in knowledge—in intellectual improvement. Inspiration has decided, that "for the soul to be without knowledge is not good." There have been periods, however, when knowledge and intellectual culture were not so manifestly demanded of Christians as at present. In those periods the enemies of religion had no means of being in advance of believers as to general intelligence. On the other hand, they were indeed, for the most part,

their inferiors. Knowledge then was looked upon very much as the monopoly of the church, and the little that did exist was to be found principally in her monasteries and her schools, such as they were. Most opinions, instead of being judiciously weighed, were inculcated and received on mere authority. But time in its progress has brought a very different state of public sentiment. The intellectual elements of the civilized world seem to be stirred with an unwonted commotion. The flood of ages has swept away a multitude of barriers that once limited the range of mind. And the improvements in the arts and sciences furnish facilities now for extended and intense intellectual action, such as the world has not witnessed. Such an action has really commenced. The claims of every system of doctrine-the claims of every form of government—of every institution, social, political, or religious, are now subjected to the investigation and scrutiny of a mass of minds unawed by authority. Public opinion is now becoming the great arbiter in all questions. Every thing is tending to show, that the human race will soon be under no other government but that of mind: that, whatever may be the instruments which it shall use, intelligence will be the arm that will rule the world. And every form of ecclesiastical, political, or social order, which cannot be supported by reason and obvious truth, is destined to be subverted and remodelled by the omnipotence of mind. Men of the world are aware of this, and are numbering their days with reference to it. They are ceasing to glory in war, and in mere animal prowess, and are striving to possess themselves of disciplined and vigorous intellect. They see that the future battles, which are to distinguish our world's history, are to be the mighty conflicts of mind-marshalling its forces, and meeting in the shock of a gigantic strife on the great line that divides truth and reason from error and absurdity. The mighty struggles of antagonist principles principles, anchored in the depths of capacious and richly stored minds, are to constitute the materials for the future historian in his book of the wars of men. Now what is the duty of Christians amid circumstances and prospects like these? Ought they not to cherish ardent desires after knowledge and intellectual improvement? Ought they not to redeem more time for this object? How will religion maintain her supremacy at such a period, if its professors are inferior in knowledge to the mass around them? Nay, how will they long retain the territory already enclosed within the limits of the church, if they are indolent while the hosts without are "running to and fro," and increasing in knowledge? Those hosts may come and "take away their place and nation." And why is it that worldly men can be so untiring devotees in the pursuit of knowledge? Is the love of intellectual power or of literary fame a motive to exertion stronger than those which the gospel presents to Christians? By no higher ends than earth can afford, a multitude of unsanctified minds have been stimulated even to death in the career of mental improvement. Time, health, riches, life, have been sacrificed in the overreachings of their souls after knowledge. But every Christian has infinitely higher motives to impel him

to make acquisitions of true science. If he be asked why he is labouring to obtain stores of knowledge, he can answer, because "the Lord hath need of them." He knows that he can bring every acquisition, and lay it down, an acceptable offering, at the feet of Jesus. He knows that mind is the great instrument through which the Redeemer is to effect those eternal purposes "that pertain to his kingdom and glory." He knows that every capability developed, every item of strength gained, is giving power to this instrument, and fitting it to be wielded with greater effect by the hand of the master. that thinks of the great ends which the infinite God accomplished by Moses, and the part which his mind, "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," performed in the stupendous drama of the world; or, who that has looked upon a Paul going from the feet of Gamaliel with all his intellectual treasures to the cross, and from the cross travelling in the greatness of his mental strength to the ends of the civilized earth, a chosen vessel bearing infinite blessings to millions, can help feeling the irrepressible risings of a holy emulation to grow in knowledge and grasp every intellectual attainment within the reach of mortals?

Would that Christians now, with far brighter prospects, might so number their days as to apply their hearts unto wisdom! Let it not be said that such great attainments are reserved for the favoured few that appear at distant intervals. This need no longer be the case; and would no longer be the case, were not the church culpably ignorant or negligent of her high privileges. There is no necessity that the great

mass of Christians should remain comparatively unintelligent. Every church might now be organized into classes for mutual instruction. Adult Bible classes might be every where established. Why not as extensively as the Sunday School system, if the church felt as she ought, that knowledge was power? And I see not, in view of the signs of these times, why all the more intelligent members of the body of Christ do not owe a solemn duty in this respect to their less informed brethren. Every Christian family, and every Christian church, ought to be organized on the plan of imparting the greatest possible amount of instruction, and of raising to its greatest elevation the intellectual standard of the members. I am persuaded that the most happy results would follow the organization of churches into classes for mutual instruction and improvement, where those of all ranks in society should mingle together. It would destroy invidious distinctions-would prevent the jealousy of the poor toward the rich, and impart a very important kind of information to the rich themselves: it would make them acquainted with the habitudes of thought and feeling amongst their humbler brethren, and exhibit to them the peculiar form which piety wears in the common walks of life. Some of the first statesmen in the world are directing their efforts to the diffusion of knowledge amongst all classes. The late Lord Chancellor of England, it is said, projected the plan of the Penny Magazine, which has now a circulation of some hundreds of thousands weekly; -- an example worthy of our richest and ablest citizens. But how long shall "the children of this world be wiser than the children of light?"

The great facilities for communicating knowledge to all ranks at the present day, point out, as with the finger of God, the duty of the church to be up and doing. The religious periodicals, tracts, and varied forms of useful intelligence which mark our day, put intellectual improvement within the reach of all. And the ease with which a livelihood can be gained in this country, and the labour-saving improvements in machinery, afford more or less time to all to be devoted to this purpose. And let it be remarked, that the humblest and most obscure Christian in the church knows not what progress he may make in knowledge, if he will only prize it more than money, and number his days wisely with reference to its attainment. In illustration of this, permit me to give you the history of a case that occurred in the place of my own nativity. A lad of fourteen years was, by the providence of God, left an orphan, without any one sufficiently interested in him, to offer him a home or employment. After the burial of his mother, he went to a neighbouring town and hired himself to an innkeeper as an hostler. He had, as may be supposed, but a partial English education. He, however, found some Latin books, and redeemed moments to attempt their perusal. He was not afforded even a candle, but he used to gather shavings during the day, and burn them on the kitchen hearth at night to pursue his studies. Yet such was the progress he made, that when it was first discovered that he had turned his attention to Latin, he was able to read Horace, one of the principal Roman authors, with ease and accuracy. He was then taken by a benevolent gentleman and fitted for college-no hard task.

He entered the college at Princeton, and graduated with the first honours. He then studied theology, afterwards became the president of a college in Pennsylvania, and at the age of thirty was called from earth, as we trust, to a sphere of far more elevated usefulness and glory.

Let not, then, the humblest individual here to-day, despair of great attainments in knowledge; they are within reach. God made your mind for knowledge, as much as he did your eye for light. And the "day-star" of intelligence hath emphatically visited us. Set your aim high this year, and follow where it leads, and your "path may be as that of the morning light."

II. In numbering our days wisely, we ought to count upon the opportunities presented for forming an elevated religious character.

Mere knowledge, valuable as it is when connected with holiness, when severed from this, is but the strength of Samson deprived of his eyes. We shall have numbered our days to little purpose, if we do not make broad calculations of growing in grace as well as in knowledge. And, my hearers, the signs of the times in reference to this object deserve very serious consideration. No period, perhaps, has ever furnished such elements for forming a high order of moral character as the present. It is admitted that those truths of God that have remained the same in every age, are the basis of religious character. Bible and the Holy Spirit are God's instrument and agent in the sanctification of a revolted world. But it is equally true, that circumstances may greatly facilitate their operations in transforming the character

of man. Let it be remembered that the agency of the Holy Spirit, and the nature of God's truth, are such that they can and do lay hold of all the great and complicated events of time as auxiliaries in their work. The effect of imposing and exciting events, in developing talent and forming worldly character, is so universally acknowledged, that it has given rise to the adage, "that man is the creature of circumstances." Now it cannot be supposed, that the great moral events that crowd into a particular period will have less influence in forming religious character, when coupled with the combined agency of the Spirit and truth of God. There have been periods when the current of years flowed on without any striking incidents adapted to effect remarkable changes in human character-dark ages, when a shadowy stillness seemed to hang over the stream of time, beneath which the mind of generation after generation slept away its being, unagitated by any of those strong excitements which give new lineaments to the heart of man. But such it will be admitted, are not the days we are now numbering. This appears to be the seed-time of a new and higher order of religious character in the church of God,—the time that has prospective reference to the millennial harvest. This we might infer from the very condition of the world around us. If the future historian gives this portion of the nineteenth century its appropriate name, he will call it, "the age of INTEN-SITY" in every department of enterprise and activity. There seems to be an amazing waking up of the powers of human nature, preparatory to some great changes in the condition of man. The mechanic and the merchant feel themselves to be under some new and undefinable impulse, that is driving them onward in an enterprise and speculation of which they once had scarcely a conception. Statesmen are grasping the subject of politics with almost the energy of desperation. The walks of literature are becoming crowded with a jostling and breathless throng of aspirants. And even vice and atheism themselves are assuming something of that boldness and intensity which characterize them in hell. Now piety, if it exist and be in exercise at all, living in the midst of such unwonted excitement, ought itself, by the very force of circumstances, to become more intense. Yes, it may and ought to assume a loftier and more decided character, from the spirit of the times.

But there are other events at present more peculiarly adapted to form a high order of moral character. One of these is the anakened attention and increased facilities for studying the Bible. The disastrous eclipse which had obscured some of the great truths of revelation for ages, has now passed off, and they are coming out on the vision of the church in unveiled splendour. At no time since revelation was completed, have there been such means and opportunities of a wide-spread and intimate knowledge of the oracles of God. Now, if the truths of these oracles, more dimly seen, formed such characters as Luther and Calvin, Baxter and Flavel, and others of like exalted attributes, what transformations may not their unclouded lustre now effect, under the influence of the Holy Ghost?

As another event in these times, adapted to form

religious character, we may notice in some respects a salutary change in the ministry of the gospel. now freed from many of the incumbrances of former ages, that destroyed its power on the conscience and the heart. The ministry has become, in some measure, what God always designed it to be, a great organ of deep and practical impression on the human mind. It has become a lucid expositor of the claims of God on the immediate services and affections of men-holding up his unchangeable law, exhibiting in a clear manner the true grounds of the sinner's guilt, and condemnation, and dependence-holding out a full, free, sincere offer of pardon and eternal life to all without exception—putting the responsibility of the sinner's choice of life or death just where God puts it, and where it properly belongs, on himself: and charging him with the guilt of rebellion against God for every hour that he delays repentance and cordial obedience to the gospel. The ministry now, instead of exhausting its powers to engage professing Christians in an unholy war for mere rites and forms, brings the precepts of Christ, that respect the practical, every-day graces and duties of life, directly upon the conscience and the heart of the church, and labours to form Christians to habits of untiring and holy activity. It is active, rather than mere contemplative piety, that is now inculcated a benevolence wide as the world, rather than the love of a sect—the luxury of blessing a sinking race, rather than the mere enjoyment of insulated and solitary religion. Now, it is easy to see what an influence such a ministry is adapted to exert in forming a high order of religious character.

Another fact bearing on this point is, that the days which we are numbering, are days in which "the glorious ministration of the Spirit," in that form which it took after the ascension of Jesus, has become more pervading and effective than it has been since the day of Pentecost. It is now, indeed, "searching all things, yea, the deep things of God;" it is proving a "discerner of the thoughts and intents" of many hearts; it is making an extended application of its regenerating and sanctifying power to multitudes of minds in Christendom, and sealing the blessings of redemption on a scale more commensurate with the tremendous exigencies of a dying world. Under such an administration of this great author of the Christian graces -this transformer of the human mind, the Spirit of God, increasing in manifestations of power and efficiency as we approach "the last times," the moral character of the church may and ought to assume a new intensity and glory.

In addition to all these, we must not overlook the obvious influence on Christian character that may be exerted by the vast system of benevolent enterprises which have been originated in our day. What an influence have great political schemes exerted on individual and national character! Does not all analogy, then, lead us to suppose that the great moral plans of this age may exert a moulding power upon religious character? Both the intellect and the heart of the church are beginning already to be dilated with the lofty conceptions, and the overwhelming emotions, associated with the work of filling the world with Bibles; of flooding it with religious tracts; of training, for all its perishing millions, an adequate mi-

nistry; and sending into its deepest recesses of darkness, the missionaries of light and love, of peace and salvation. This state of things in the church is too recent to exhibit, as yet, those great results in the formation of religious character which it is adapted to effect. But who does not see that it furnishes the elements of an order of moral character amongst Christians, such as the church has not witnessed since her apostolic days?

In view, then, of all the circumstances mentioned, does it not become us, in wisely numbering our days, to make a new and mighty reach after greater attainments in holiness? What is to prevent us from taking a far higher rank in the scale of moral character than the generations that have preceded us? What shall hinder us from rising above the mists of past centuries, and shining in all "the beauty of the Lord our God?" What shall hinder young Christians in our day from mounting, as on wings of eagles, and soaring nearer and nearer, with more than the eagle's strength of vision, to the Sun of righteousness, - bathing themselves in the living light of his beams, and becoming "changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord?"

III. In numbering our days wisely, we ought to count upon exerting a far More widely extended influence as Christians. Such are the laws of our intellectual and social being, and such are the relations and connexions of one mind with another, that an influence of some kind we must and shall inevitably exert. The kind of influence exerted, and the direction which that influence shall take, will be one

of the most solemn items of man's last account to his God. The elements of Christian influence are knowledge and holiness. The degree of knowledge and holiness, particularly of the latter, will measure the extent of the Christian influence which an individual or a church may exert. This indeed is an argument why we should number our days with a reference to intellectual and spiritual attainments. But those treasures of mind and heart which we acquire are not to be hoarded as the miser's heaps of gold. The times that are passing over us constitute the great working period in the history of our world —the practical age of the species, when utility takes the precedence of all theory and speculation. Capitalists are making larger and more advantageous investments. Politicians are grasping at a more extended influence over the popular mind. The business and pleasures, the wealth and elevation, and advancement of the human race, are now projected on a mightier scale than at any former era in the chronicles of time. Does it not become Christians, then, with their eyes on the signs of these times, to count with a holy enthusiasm on a deep and vastly extended Christian influence over their fellow-men?

I am persuaded that we have too low an estimate of the possible power of Christian character. In numbering our days, then, with reference to a large investment of the capital of Christian influence, let us look at what has been accomplished by some uninspired men of no very remarkable mental endowments. Who does not feel an emotion of the sublime, as he contemplates the immeasurable impression which Richard Baxter made on his generation, and

on succeeding ages, though he lived in an intolerant and stormy period of the religious world's history? What a controlling sway he held over the consciences and hearts of multitudes! How wide, and deep, and enduring the influence which David Brainerd exerted, even in the state of society which existed in this country almost a century ago! And what shall we say of a Mills and a Martin, a Hall and a Payson, "who being dead, yet speak?" It is hardly presumptuous to say of such spirits, that, like the language of the planetary orbs on high, "their line has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." Now the time must come, nay, it has come, when we ought to consider these cases not as exceptions, but as the legitimate measure of Christian influence, and fix our aim accordingly. Let us remember, too, how many more facilities of making our influence to be felt we possess, in our day, than did these holy men. What an easy, rapid, and extensive intercourse can we now have with society, compared with that enjoyed half a century since! With what a multitude of minds can Christian character come in contact in a comparatively short period! How much more available is the power of holy example now than in those past days, when population was more sparse, and the means of personal intercourse more restricted! What an organ of extended Christian influence does the religious press constitute! This, under God, is to be the angel of Christendom, "standing in the sun,"the great dispenser of the Church's moral light to the world. Think, too, what instruments of power are put into the hands of Christians by the organization of the great benevolent societies of these times, They can thus truly extend themselves, in an important sense, "beyond their measure,"—can stretch out the arm of mercy and pour light on the darkness and miseries of the whole earth. We can cause our Christian influence to be felt alike in the regions of the Rocky Mountains in our own land. and along the rivers and bays, the hills and valleys, of Asia and Africa. Besides, that very excitability of the popular mind, which we have already noticed, furnishes a peculiar facility for an extended Christian influence. There is a strange moveableness in the general mind of society. An illustrious exemplification of this is to be found in the history of the temperance reform. The popular mind has become susceptible of being set in motion now, by causes that a quarter of a century since might have exerted all their power without attracting notice. Society craves excitement of some kind, and will have it. Why, then, should not the representatives of Christ-the lights of the world-make their influence to be felt extensively? The world is not "without souls",-men have consciences and hearts -they have hopes and fears respecting an eternal hereafter. Why, then, should not the exhibition of the high attributes of Christian character—the power of pre-emineutly holy example-if brought in earnest upon the mass of ruined yet immortal mind, begin to make that mass heave and move under the impulse, heavenward! Has not that Christianity which we profess, the elements of a mightier excitement to the popular mind than commerce, internal improvement, politics, literature or the arts? It certainly had, as lived out by Christ and his apostles, and primitive followers. It superseded the excitement

of Judaism at Jerusalem, of philosophy at Athens, and of arms at Rome, and became the object of absorbing interest to the then known world. Christianity is still unaltered, and that human nature on which it is to operate is the same. If the solitary influence of Paul, then, circled half the civilized world, what a mighty reach combined Christian influence might now make on the ready excitability of the general mind! Let the church of God, then, wake up, and in wisely numbering their days let Christians count on an indefinite extension of their moral power. Let them aim at nothing less than an influence which shall break up the monotony of sin and death, and move the entire fountains of the great deep of thought and feeling in human society. This is the only excitement that is safe for man, or that will satisfy the popular mind. All the agitations and tumults of the race prove that the soul of man, mighty even in its ruins, is blindly reaching after those objects of exciting magnitude and glory, which can alone be found in pure Christianity. Let us determine, then. by the grace of God, to send out a Christian influence in a length and breadth that shall control these infinite but ill-directed aspirations of the immortal mind!

Another consideration to urge us to aim at extending our Christian influence is, that the world in these days is held in a general expectation of some vast movement about to be made by Christians.

The world does not calculate that the standard of Christian character, and the measure of Christian influence, will long remain what they have been and now are. It is presumed that piety will feel the

impulse that is urging onward, with such momentum, every department of worldly activity. The community has heard much about the church's resurrection from the sleep and moral death of ages! The public mind has been turned to the recent marshalling of her forces. Infidel jealousy is watching the effect of her comprehensive plans of influencing the moral destinies of the race. A multitude of unsanctified hearts are brought within the reach of her deep and mighty sympathies for the miseries of the whole world, and a multitude of minds are eagerly contemplating her recent purposes and resolves, that that world shall be redeemed. Worldly men see that the mind of the church is beginning to be turned in expectancy and hope of a coming millennium: that there is a pervading apprehension of the near approach of that grand crisis in which "the kingdom and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the saints of the Most High God." They know that Christians regard the present as the Saturday evening of time: that they are saying one to another, the Sabbath, the great Sabbath of the world "draweth on." Worldly men, then, expect to see the disciples of Christ coming forth in that energy of character, and that extended sweep of Christian influence, which will prepare themselves and the world for so sublime a consummation.

My Christian friends, what should prevent us from determining, in reliance on God, that we will meet this expectation of the world? Nay, is not the honour of our holy religion perilled, if we fail to meet it? The measure of former attainments, and of former efforts, will no longer sustain the credit of Christianity. If we would honour Christ and sustain the interest of

his cause, we must overtake and go beyond the anticipations of the world on this subject.

Lastly: As a motive to numbering our days wisely, with reference to a greatly extended Christian influence, let us frequently and solemnly call to mind one grand end which God has in view in his eternal existence. God lives and reigns with this, amongst other great ends in view, viz., that he may exert an influence in kind like that of pure Christianity. It is one great aim of his being, to bring forth and impress on the minds of his rational creation, the eternal truth and purity of his own character. He administers the affairs of the universe with the steady view of exerting the highest and best moral influence over its intelligent millions. Is it not wise, then, in Christians, to count upon exerting the greatest possible degree of the same kind of influence?

Beloved brethren, carry with you through this year, and through life, the undying conviction that progress in knowledge, in holiness, and in enlarged Christian influence, is your great business—the grand object to be counted on in your estimate of time. And though your days may be few or many, spend them all under the soul-animating and heavenly influence of such an object. We know not who of us are appointed unto death this year. But for such as are, will it not soften the dying pillow to sink down upon it, not in indolence and mental stupor, but in the increasing swiftness of our Christian career! And will it not add unspeakably to our eternal joy, to be able to say in death, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith?"

SERMON XI.

THE PERFECTION OF THE DIVINE LAW.

"The law of the Lord is perfect."—PSALM xix. 7.

ORDER and harmony pervade all the works of God. This order and harmony are not the result of accident or chance. They originate from the laws which God has established. The fixed and regular alternations of night and day, of spring, summer, autumn and winter, the revolutions of the planets, and all the changes of the material universe, from the mightiest, to the most minute, from the dissolution of a world, to the fall of a single leaf of the forest, occur in obedience to those appropriate laws which God has established to govern the phenomena of matter. These physical laws are perfect. are suited to the nature of the subjects to which they apply. They operate uniformly and infallibly in producing the results at which they aim. There is neither failure nor confusion in the great system of nature. And what is true of these physical laws, is equally true of those laws that govern our intellectual nature merely as rational creatures. The succession of thought, the origin of emotion, and certain natural impulses to action, are precisely the same to a given extent in all minds. This shows that there are established laws of mind, and that they are perfect, suited to the subjects to which they are applied, and securing uniformly and with certainty, the general results at which they aim. Is it not reasonable to suppose, then, that God, who has bound all the material and intellectual works of his hands by appropriate and perfect laws which maintain order and harmony through the whole, would establish some law for the government of man's moral nature? Surely he would not leave so interesting a department as this lawless. Of all things else in the universe, it is least to be expected that he would abandon those powers and susceptibilities of the soul that fit it to know, love, obey, and enjoy God for ever to their own unguided action? We naturally look for the prescriptions of law here. Order and harmony here are of vastly more moment than in the arrangements of the material universe. Accordingly we find the moral law of God extending its control over this entire department of our nature. It claims to regulate all the thoughts, feelings, and actions that belong to our moral or spiritual agency. The grand characteristic of this law is furnished in the declaration of our text. "The law of the Lord is perfect." It will be my object to show that this is true of the divine law, in whatever aspect it may be contemplated.

I. The law of the Lord is perfect in its origin or source. No law deserves respect and obedience that does not emanate from legitimate right and authority on the part of its maker or makers. Were

an unauthorized body of men, wise and good men in other respects, to meet and enact laws in themselves just and salutary, still such laws would not be entitled to the regard and observance of the citizens because they would not, in that case, emanate from a legitimate source. The body of men that enacted them never were invested with the right or the power to legislate. All proper authority would be wanting; and however the enactments of such a body of men might assume the forms, and contain all the wholesome provisions of good laws, they would in fact be no laws. Their origin, or source, would destroy their claim to respect and obedience. But "the law of the Lord is perfect" in its very origin or source. It emanates from that eternal Mind which possesses in itself an independent, perfect right, an absolute and infinite authority to legislate for all the rational creation. This right and authority rest upon the attributes of God, and the relations which he holds to his intelligent creatures. It is not an arbitrary right and authority. God's self-existence, independence, omniscience, omnipotence, wisdom, benevolence, justice, holiness, truth and immutability form the highest qualifications, and give the most absolute and perfect right to legislate of which we can possibly conceive. His relations to his intelligent creatures as their Creator, upholder, benefactor, and moral governor, give him an authority over them commensurate with all the capacities and powers of their immortal being; an authority like these relations on which it is founded, changeless, infinite, eternal. The law of the Lord emanates from these perfections of his nature, is the bright transcript

of them, claims obedience, and carries with it the sanction of an authority grand and august as those exalted and eternal relations which he sustains to his rational creatures. Coming from the counsels, and imbodying the perfections of Jehovah's mind with the broad seal of his right and his authority upon it, is not the law of the Lord perfect in respect to its origin or source? Has any law besides in the wide universe a claim so perfect, a source so sublime?

II. The law of the Lord is perfect in the equity of its requirements. In the legislation of man, nothing is more difficult than to enact laws that shall neither require too much nor too little of the subjects. The instances of human legislation in which the principle of requirement can be so graduated as not to operate injuriously, if not unjustly on some, are extremely few. This probably results from the fact that human knowledge is not competent to ascertain the precise abilities of those for whom it legislates. We therefore take the medium capacities of the subjects, and make a general law which will not apply with strict justice to either extreme. And this is all that finite and fallible legislation can do. By consequence, the requirements of all human laws are less or more imperfect. But not so the law of the Lord. Its principle of requirement is graduated with perfect exactitude to the actual capacity of each subject to whom it is applied. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might, and thy neighbour as thyself." The peculiarity of this requirement is, that it does not prescribe a definite and

specific amount of the thing demanded, without reference to the ability of the individual. It makes the actual capacities of each one the measure of obedience. That this is the great rule of the divine requirements, is plain from the parable of the talents. The man who received the one talent, was not condemned because he had not gained five talents, but simply because he had not improved the one which he actually had. We have direct proof of this truth in respect to the requirement of the divine law, from the New Testament. "If there be first a willing mind, it is required of a man according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not." God's law makes obligation commensurate only with actual ability.* The law of the Lord does not require the uneducated individual of small capacities, to love him with all the heart, soul and might of Paul. It takes no one individual or number of individuals, as the measure for all the rest. It exacts not a thought, a feeling or an action from any one in the universe beyond his present actual capacity. It is with all his own might that each individual is required to love God. It is not love of a specific amount, nor love exercised by a certain fixed degree of capacity that is required, but simply the love of the whole heart, soul, and might of the individual, whatever may be the relative degree of his capacities. Till men, then, have neither heart, soul, nor might in the lowest degree, they must not complain of the equity of the requirements of the law of the Lord. Its principle of requirement is absolutely perfect. How admirably it adapts itself to all the diversity of capacities in the

^{*} I use the term in the sense of physical capacity.

intelligent universe! It claims of Gabriel no less than all that he is able to do, and it requires of the Hottentot, to whom it is made known, no more than his stinted capacities enable him to perform. "EACH ONE ACCORDING TO HIS SEVERAL ABILITY," is written in capitals of light over the table of the divine law. Hence our blessed Lord represents the unreasonableness and criminality of that servant who had received one talent, in saying, "I knew thee, that thou art an austere man, reaping that thou didst not sow, and gathering that thou didst not strew." This is a gross libel on the equity of the law of the Lord. Its demands are graduated with perfect precision to the ability of every rational being throughout the empire of God. Its principle of requirement is so perfect that it will never need to be altered. This principle has a power of self-adjustment, by which it adapts itself with exact justice to the varying capacities of the same individual at different periods in his existence. Between the capacities of "a babe in Christ," and those of a perfected spirit in glory, there are many degrees, a vast increase of ability acquired through successive periods. Yet this simple though sublime principle of requirement applies with perfect equity through all this increase of capacities in the subject. When a babe in Christ, it only required the whole infant heart, soul, and might, when "a perfect man," it requires still only all the manly heart, soul, and might. To a spirit of the just made perfect in heaven, it speaks the same language,-" Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." It only claims of the subject, then, what his actual ability fits him to render. You may trace this principle of

requirement in its application to all the rational subjects of God, amidst all their changes and through all the periods of their existence for ever, and in no circumstances and at no time does it ever claim aught beyond the actual capacity of the individual. It demands no impossibilities. Its successive claims on man through time and through eternity, are always, and will be always, brought strictly within the limits of his natural faculties as a creature of God, though they may have no reference to the degree of his moral disposition to obey. What a difference between this principle of requirement, and that of any human enactment! "The law of the Lord is perfect" in its requirements. Those requirements are founded on the infinite equity of the Divine mind, and commend themselves to the conscience of mankind, and to their natural sense of right and justice.

III. The law of the Lord is perfect as to the extent of its requirements. Human laws seldom aim at more than to regulate the outward actions of men. It is but a part of these that can be embraced within the commands and prohibitions of man's legislation. The thoughts, the purposes, the motives and intention of the mind itself, lie beyond the recognition and control of human law. A negative external morality. therefore, is all that the best laws of man's enactment can produce. How different is the law of the Lord! The psalmist was struck with this difference, when he devoutly exclaimed,-" But thy commandment is exceeding broad."-" The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." It aims to control the entire inner and outer man. It extends its requirements at once to all the secrets of the heart. Those

powers of hidden imaginings, of concealed plans and purposes, those capabilities of deep emotion in the retirements of the soul, to which finite penetration cannot have access, the motives and intentions of the mind known only to Omniscience, the law of the Lord claims all these for Jehovah. These form an important part of that whole heart, soul, and might with which man is to love the Lord his God. Not a faculty or power of our being is exempt for one moment from the claims of the law of the Lord. Not a talent, habit, or facility of obedience which we may obtain by the exercise of our powers, but is required of us as soon as it is our own. This law resigns no hour of our time to be squandered, no privilege to be neglected, no opportunity of doing or of getting good, to be lost, no period of indolence to the affections, no pause to the untiring activities of the soul. From the moment that moral agency commences, through all the progressions of our immortal existence, the whole heart, soul, and might with all their enlarging capacities and augmenting strength, are claimed for God. Perfect and perpetual obedience to the full extent of our natural ability, and through the whole duration of our being, is the grand essential requirement of the law of the Lord. vet this very perfection is the ground of the incessant war which sinners are waging against the law of God. They cannot complain that this law requires more of them than their natural faculties would render it possible for them to perform, but they quarrel with it, just because it is so exceedingly broad, and does require ALL, the UTMOST of their present natural ability. Now this is no unimportant characteristic of the perfection of God's law. It is this which renders the

perfection of its requirements pre-eminently conspicuous. If this law emanates from the perfection of Jehovah, and derives its authority from the relations which he sustains to men as their Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and moral Governor, would it not be a glaring imperfection were the law to claim less of them than their capacities enabled them to render? Would not such a limited requirement convey to the universe a false impression respecting the rights and authority of God over his creatures? If he has a right to any obedience from them, has he not a right to all that they can render, with the powers he himself has bestowed on them? If, as God their Creator and Governor, he has any authority over them, must it not necessarily be absolute, perfect, extending to their entire capacities? Again, if the law of the Lord be the appropriate rule of man's moral nature. and if obedience to it be the means of man's highest happiness, then how could God by requiring less than man's capacities enabled him to render, permit a part of his moral powers to be without control, and a part of the happiness which would result from entire obedience to be lost to him for ever? No; it is the perfection and glory of the law of the Lord, that while it does not in any case require aught of the subject beyond his actual capacity, whatever that may be, yet it does demand ALL the heart, soul, and might. It brings its broad claims over all those powers of our being with which God has endowed us, and would bind them to his throne in everlasting loyalty and obedience.

IV. The law of the Lord is perfect in respect of its penalty. To some this announcement will doubtless

sound strangely; for it is the penalty of God's law that disturbs the peace and awakens the enmity of the deprayed heart. Men would care very little how extensive and rigid might be the requirements of the divine law, were they enforced by no sanction or penalty. Here lies their great objection to the law of the Lord, its tremendous penalty. We might answer this objection by simply affirming what every intelligent thinking man will acknowledge to be true, that is, that it would be no law at all without a penalty, it would then be mere powerless counsel or advice. The two great objections to the law of the Lord in respect to its penalty, are these: that it condemns for the first act of violation, and denounces so awful a punishment as eternal misery on the unredeemed transgressor. Now we think that we can show that these two characteristics are the very perfection of a penalty. Let us inquire for a moment what is the nature and the design of the penalty which God has annexed to his law. God never affixed a penalty to his law, merely with the design that his rational creatures should incur that penalty as an end, the same as that they should obtain the rewards of obedience as an ultimate end. Nor did he annex the penalty to his law for the sake of the misery it inflicts on the transgressor, in itself considered and as an ulterior end. Nothing but unmixed malignity could prompt to a penalty whose only aim was this. The penalty of the divine law is not in itself an ultimate end, it does not aim at producing the miseries that it threatens for their own sake, and as the final result which it proposes to accomplish. The penalty of God's law is not an

end, but a means, -- a means of what? -- a means intended to prevent transgression, and those natural consequences of misery which are connected with transgression, independent of the direct inflictions of a positive penalty. The ulterior end, then, proposed to be attained by the penalty of the divine law, is the prevention of sin and misery, and the promotion of the highest happiness of intelligent creatures.* Now, this being the nature and design of the penalty, let us see what kind of penalty would be best adapted as a means to the attainment of the proposed end, namely: to prevent sin and misery, and to promote holiness and happiness. On what principle does the penalty propose to gain this great end? Obviously by operating on man's fears, on his instinctive dread and recoiling from pain. Now suppose the penalty was not incurred by the first sin, suppose the law connived at ninety-nine sins, and brought down its penalty on the hundredth, or at nine hundred and ninety-nine, and threatened its penalty on the thousandth: in what conceivable way would this operate on man's fears of transgressing, and prevent that habit and that reckless hardihood of sinning, which would secure with certainty the hundredth or the thousandth sin on which the penalty would be inflicted? Would the motive be as powerful and perfect in this case, as if the penalty held

^{*} The author does not mean to affirm that the vindication of God's own character, and the exhibition of his abhorrence of sin, is not an end to be attained by the penalty of the law. But is it not an end having reference to a higher and ultimate one, namely: that of promoting the greatest degree of holiness and happiness in his universal and eternal empire, by this very vindication of his own character, and this expression of His righteous hatred against sin?

its thunders ready to burst on the very first transgression? By no means. It would detract immeasurably from its force on the fears of man, give a false impression of God's feelings respecting sin, and a license to the sinner that would with certainty bring him under the penalty at last.

Suppose the miseries which the penalty threatens to the finally incorrigible, and unredeemed violator, were less than the woes of a ruined eternity, were finite, and, therefore, to an immortal being, comparatively trivial? How would this tend to secure the great end which the penalty has in view, namely, to deter from sin and consequent suffering, and to promote holiness and consequent happiness? If the passion of fear be appealed to at all, why not make the appeal as powerful as possible. If the promptings of a slight fear would tend to prevent men from sinning and suffering, would not the most powerful impulses of this passion tend much more certainly to secure this result? If the passion of fear, in its highest excitement, be a necessary auxiliary amongst the means and the motives that are to save men from sin and misery, then would it be benevolent in God to affix a penalty to his law that would only excite that passion a little? Two things are now perfectly plain. 1. The passion of fear being quick and strong, may be used as an impulse to prevent man from sinning and suffering. 2. In order to be so used with the best effect, the motive that appeals to it, must be as powerful and perfect as it can possibly be made. Now the infinite and eternal woes, which the penalty of God's law denounces on the finally incorrigible transgressor, is the most powerful motive that could be

brought to operate on his fears. Could you subtract aught from these woes, and not at the same time inevitably weaken one motive necessary to prevent man from incurring those woes,—the motive that appeals to his fears? Keeping in view the nature and design of the penalty, remembering that God's benevolence led him to adopt it as a means of preventing sin and misery, and of promoting holiness and happiness, and that it can secure this end only in proportion as it operates effectually on the fears of men, and who can gainsay the truth of the text, that "The law of the Lord is perfect," even in respect to its PENALTY? In that stern condemnation which it passes on the first sin, and in that tremendous aggregation of woes present and future, which it denounces on the transgressor, shine out the perfection of the penalty. Herein is seen the infinite benevolence of God, in giving the greatest possible power, and the wisest adaptation to that motive designed to operate on the fears of man, and to shield him from the greatest evils and secure to him the richest blessings that pertain to his mortal and immortal nature.

V. The law of the Lord is perfect in its tendency to promote happiness. The gain to human happiness from the best legislation of man, is comparatively trifling. Its influence on happiness is negative and indirect. Human law aims rather at preventing misery, than at promoting positive happiness. Its precepts and its prohibitions do not extend their control over those great moral elements within the mind itself, on whose government the highest happiness of man depends. The conscience and the heart, with

all their susceptibilities, the inward temper, the principles, the habits, the motives and ruling purpose of the soul, spurn the restraints that human enactments would impose on them. Yet it is by the wise regulations of these powers of man's moral agency, that his highest happiness is secured. Now these are the very powers over which the law of the Lord asserts its supremacy. In order to estimate the perfection of this law, in its tendency to promote happiness. we must contemplate what the result would be, were it perfectly and perpetually obeyed. Suppose every man on earth were swayed supremely by the law of the Lord, and were constantly exercising to God. and to his neighbour, the love that it requires. What would be the effect on individual and social happiness? No one would feel the uneasiness of an inordinate desire, the plague of a malignant passion or emotion, the violent and painful impulse of ungoverned appetites, and vicious propensities; regret, remorse, self-condemnation and all the woes of a guilty conscience would be unknown; avarice, ambition, jealousies, strifes, emulations, rivalry, envy, pride, intrigue, dishonesty, falsehood, tale-bearing, backbiting, whisperings and evil surmisings, would cease to torment the individual or afflict society. Family feuds, neighbourhood quarrels, intestine and national wars would cease to the ends of the earth. Profaneness, intemperance, licentiousness, theft, robbery and murder, would no longer inflict their giant miseries on man. There would be no harrowing forebodings of evil to the individual or to society, no dejection, gloom and despondency, to drive men to madness and suicide. What a mighty aggregation of evils.

of positive miseries, would thus be removed by obedience to the divine law. Then think of the positive happiness that would thus be promoted. Each mind under the absolute sway of a law, the wisest and best adapted to its moral nature, that the infinite God could frame. Each one filled with the peace of God; "for great peace have they that love his law." All the powers of the soul balanced, harmonized and brought under the control of supreme love to God: made to act rightly, to have the approbation of conscience, and a sense of the smiles of Heaven, the mind, with all its powers and susceptibilities, occupied and absorbed in love, adoration, praise, gratitude and devotion to God? These exercises, in their very nature, are adapted to promote the greatest happiness of rational beings. Then think of the incessant exercise of the benevolent affections to his fellow men, the love that like an angel of mercy is ever active in relieving the wants, and soothing the woes of the poor and afflicted, the charity that "thinketh no evil," but "suffereth long, and is kind," the benevolence that is ever forming and executing plans for the social, intellectual and spiritual improvement and happiness of the race, the affection that pours its ardent prayers at the footstool of God, for the temporal and eternal well being of man, and the untiring activity in every department of Christian enterprise where the interests and happiness of one's fellow men may be promoted. What an exalted enjoyment must such a play of the benevolent affections secure? What union, harmony, peace, brotherly-kindness, joy, what cultivation of all the noblest powers of human nature, what advancement in all the virtues

that adorn and bless rational beings, what a moral elevation, what high hopes and infinite aspirations, what a sublime aggregate of human happiness to the race would be the necessary result of perfect obedience to the law of the Lord. This is the legitimate tendency of the divine law. The very love to God and to man which it requires, and which is the spirit of obedience, is the most exalted affection, and the exercise of it the most ennobling employment of the rational and moral powers of our nature. It allies us, and brings us into fraternity and fellowship with God, and with all the good of the universe. It makes us like to God. For "there is not a more amiable, attractive nor comprehensive idea of the divine Being any where to be found, than that which is exhibited by the apostle John in three words, "God is Love." It is, therefore, the very element and essence of Jehovah's happiness, and must be so to every rational, intelligent creature. Such, then, is the nature and tendency on happiness of that love which is the fulfilling of the law. And the actual sum of happiness which the law of the Lord has secured, and will secure to the universe, none but God himself can compute. What has secured all the happiness that has been enjoyed by angels, cherubim, and seraphim, thrones, principalities, and powers in heavenly places, by all the unfallen intelligences in God's dominions? Perfect obedience to the law of the Lord. What will secure the augmenting happiness of all these myriads, and mighty orders of beings through eternity? Perfect, perpetual obedience to the law of the Lord. What makes the bliss of heaven and of the holy universe, so different now from

the few and scattered joys of earth? Simply because there God's law is obeyed universally, perfectly, and perpetually. Those holy throngs, amidst their high hosannahs and rapturous bliss, might well exclaim, "The law of the Lord is perfect;" wonderful in its influence on the happiness of the intelligent creation.

LASTLY.—The law of the Lord is perfect in respect to its continuance or duration.

The progress and changes of society require the best human laws to undergo modifications, or to be repealed. Their duration is necessarily limited, and like all the other products of imperfect minds, they pass away. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever, his law is perpetual. Founded on his own perfections, and on those immutable relations which He holds to His creatures, perfect in the equity and extent of its requirements, graduating its claims always within the actual ability of the subject, and tending to promote his highest happiness,—the divine law is applicable to all intelligent creatures, at all times during their eternal existence. It has a wonderful facility of adjustment, by which it is justly applicable to all rational creatures, amidst all the changes of time, circumstances, and capacity which may characterize their immortal history. The law is as applicable, as holy, just, and good in its demands on Satan now, as when he shone an unfallen spirit in primeval holiness before the throne of God. No change of circumstances, no progressions of time, no apostacy from God, and no degree of depravity and rebellion in the subjects, can ever require the alteration or repeal of the law of the Lord. It is the law of the moral nature of all intelligences, the infallible

rule of right, truth, and duty, the safe-guard of the holiness and happiness of the universe, and while these continue to be the great objects at which the benevolent administration of God aims, the law will remain to protect and promote them. The convulsions and revolutions of time cannot destroy it. The fires of the final conflagration will not consume one of those bands, nor render brittle one of those cords by which it binds all rational natures in love supreme to God, and benevolence to each other. After the judgment, and onward for ever, it will be the great law of God's eternal government, the grand ligament that will bind the holy of all worlds to the throne of Jehovah in immortal loyalty. The law of the Lord is perfect, for its duration will be parallel with the existence of that infinite Mind from which it emanated

In the light of this subject we can see something of the malignity of sin. Every sin is a violation of this perfect glorious law. It is an insult offered to those perfections, and a disregard of those relations of God to his creatures, on which the divine law is founded. It is a libel on the justice of the law, an attempt to weaken its authority, to throw off the restraints which it imposes on human depravity, to abandon to lawless anarchy the moral powers of the soul, to destroy the holiness and happiness which the law aims to promote, to dethrone God, and to spread malevolence, misrule, and misery over his wide empire. If the law of the Lord be such as has now been described, this is the nature and tendency of all sin. O, what an awful malignity characterizes every violation of this law! What must be the guilt

contracted by the reckless and habitual transgression of such a law? What but the woes of an eternal hell could be an adequate punishment for wilful, persevering, and final rebellion against such a law?

FINALLY. In the light of this subject, we see how hopeless it is for sinners to wage war with, and rebel against the law of the Lord.

How can men expect to be successful in such a contest? They can never have a sense of justice on their side, nor the approbation of their own consciences. When men resist human laws, and attempt to procure their abrogation, they do so by pointing out the defects of the laws, the injustice of their requirements, their unequal and injurious operations in certain specific cases. Treason, and the mad spirit of revolution, have to make some show of grievances resulting from the application and bearings of the laws they would annul. But what objection can the sinner bring against the law of the Lord? What plea can he offer for resisting that law? And what power can his puny arm wield to alter or abate one of its righteous demands? None. The perfections of God's nature, His relations to His creatures, the interests of holiness and the happiness of the intelligent universe, all stand pledged to sustain the divine law. While God occupies the throne, and while infinite benevolence reigns triumphant there, intent on securing the purity and the bliss of all rational intelligences, so long will His perfect law be sustained by all the right and authority that Jehovah can give to it. That law will remain, and press its uncompromising claims on every moral subject in the universe, till he either acknowledges its equity, and bows in

obedience to its requirements, or continues his fruitless and mad rebellion, till he falls the hopeless victim of that eternal weight of woes which its penalty will inflict on the finally disobedient. Wo to him that striveth with his Maker. Sinner, what can you hope for, if you continue to rebel against the holy and perfect law of the Lord? Nothing, nothing but a "certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, that shall devour the adversaries."

SERMON XII.

GOD THE INCOMPARABLE TEACHER.

"Who teacheth like him?"-Job xxxvii. 22.

MAN has no innate or hereditary knowledge. Beyond a few simple sensations, belonging merely to animal life, the infantile mind knows nothing. Each individual of our race, as he comes into the world, is wholly dependent for his knowledge of the ordinary affairs of life, on sources of instruction out of himself. He learns the properties and relations of matter by the teachings of natural objects around him, by the impressions which those objects make on the mind, through the medium of the senses. He learns other things that pertain to the present life, by the instructions and example of parents, and those who are superior to him in age and experience. If man be thus dependent on external sources of instruction for the knowledge that fits him for the duties and enjoyments of his present existence, how much more as an apostate from God, a depraved sinner, is he dependent on some source of teaching out of himself for that spiritual knowledge which is to fit him for his duty and enjoyment here, and for his high destinies hereafter. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither indeed

can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Our depraved race have evinced a wonderful slowness of heart to believe, and to understand the things that belong to their peace. If these things are ever clearly and practically taught to them, it must be from some source of instruction, without and beyond themselves. The great means of instruction on this subject are the works, the ways, the word, and the ordinances of God.

Job's friends endeavoured to convince him that God's afflictive providences to him were designed to teach him a lesson, either that he was insincere, hypocritical in his profession as a saint, or that he had been guilty of some known and flagrant sin. While they erred in the application of certain great and general principles to Job's particular case, they nevertheless uttered many important and pertinent truths. They falsely supposed that Job had cherished some secret and heinous sin for which God was afflicting him, and of which they supposed God meant to convict him, and to teach him the evil in the most impressive manner by his judgments. "Take heed, regard not iniquity, for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction. Behold God exalteth by his power. Who teacheth like him?" This question, it is taken for granted, is unanswerable. None can teach like God.

My object in this discourse shall be to illustrate this position, or to show the incomparable excellence of God's teaching. Let it be remembered, that his teaching refers to the communication of Divine truth to the human mind.

I. I remark, in the first place, then, that none can 21*

teach like God, because none has so intimate a knowledge as he of the things taught. The great secret of successful teaching, consists in one's being intimately and thoroughly acquainted with the facts or truths which he attempts to communicate. We can never convey to another an idea or conception more clear and definite than it exists in our own minds. When a writer or speaker is obscure or unintelligible, it is because his knowledge of the subjects of which he treats, is vague, partial, and defective. Obscurity of thought, makes obscurity in style, either in writing or speaking. When a mind has clear, well defined, accurate views on any subject, it can communicate them intelligibly to others. The common remark, that we have an idea of a thing, but cannot express it or convey it to another, is unphilosophical and untrue, except where there is some remarkable deficiency in the command of language. In proportion as any mind has a familiar, correct, comprehensive knowledge of the truths to be taught, in the same ratio will he be a successful teacher. Now apply this principle to the communication of the knowledge of Divine truth to the human mind, and in this respect, who can teach like God? His knowledge of the whole circle of universal and eternal truth is intuitive and absolute. His omniscience necessarily comprehends all actual and all possible knowledge. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" "His understanding is infinite." How intimate, all-comprehending, absolute, is his knowledge of the things to be taught! Is man to be taught the knowledge of the Divine attributes, the glorious perfections of Jehovah's

nature? These are the essential qualities of that infinite Mind which undertakes to teach them,-they live in the bright consciousness of that Mind,—are seen, and felt, every moment just as they exist,-their distinctions marked with infinite precision, -- their blended and contrasted glories, loved and admired by the eternal Mind in which they inhere. If there be point in that inspired question, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man, which is in him," there is still greater pertinency in the declaration, "even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." He has an intimate, absolute, infinite knowledge of his own attributes. Who then can teach in this respect like him? Is man to be taught the great principles of God's providence over the world? Who understands so thoroughly as God, the constitution of that kingdom which ruleth over all? that kingdom which includes all the movements, and adjusts all the events from the greatest to the least, that fill up the entire history of this terrestrial scene? Who knows as God does, the plan of that providence so all-comprehending, and yet so minute in its operations, as to embrace alike the rise and ruin of empires, and the fall of a sparrow? It is his own plan. It originated in his own infinite mind. His Divine wisdom and benevolence formed it. In all its parts, and from its commencement to its close, it lies as a perfect transparency, spread out before his omniscience! His omnipotence is constantly presiding over all its movements, and executing this plan with infinite exactitude. Has he not the most familiar, perfect knowledge of the grand principles of his universal providence? Who can teach

them like him? Again: is man to be taught the great truths of the plan of salvation? Is he to be made to comprehend something of the mysteries of eternal love and mercy that are to be developed in time and consummated in immortality by this mighty scheme? Who knows this scheme as God knows it? It is all his own, it was laid in his eternal counsels-it occupied his mind "of old from everlasting." His infinite, eternal love suggested it-that love formed the wondrous plan, and is actively carrying it out in the redemption of the world. It is, perhaps, the grandest plan of the divine Mind-the darling object of Jehovah's administration over the universe-embracing more disclosures of the amiable perfections of his own nature-involving greater interests of his intelligent empire, and destined to wind up with a more overwhelming glory than will signalize the consummation of any of the Divine plans. The constitution of this scheme—the great principles which it contains—the provisions which it makes for the lost—the conditions on which those provisions are available, the blessedness it secures if accepted, and the woes that are incurred by its rejection, these all lie naked and open before that infinite Mind, which devised and is executing this scheme. That Mind has the most perfect, comprehensive, absolute knowledge of this whole scheme in its origin, commencement, progress, completion, and eternal results! Who can teach the great truths of redemption like God?

II. None can teach like him, because God has the most intimate knowledge of the nature of the mind to be instructed.

Ignorance of the nature and properties of the thing to be operated upon, is the certain cause of failure in any effort or enterprise. A knowledge of the operations and laws of the mind is indispensably necessary to successful teaching. All analogy proves this. If a man be ignorant of the qualities of certain chemical substances, he could not, in the nature of the case, perform with them a successful experiment. No man could play upon an instrument whose parts and powers he did not understand. And this is equally true in the communication of instruction to the human mind,-that may be regarded as an instrument of exquisite mechanism, with a thousand springs of delicate and nice adjustment. How can an ignorant hand touch those springs, and put in motion and control the action of this wonderful, mental machinery? Especially, how can one ignorant of the moral susceptibilities of the mind, hope to communicate divine truth to it successfully? It is obvious that just in proportion as any one has clear, correct, and enlarged views of the entire nature and capabilities of the mind, in the same proportion can he teach -can he influence that mind by truth. Now in this respect God has an infinite advantage as a teacher. He knows "what is in man." He is "the Father of our spirits." He made the human mind. Its constitution, its powers, its susceptibilities, the laws that regulate its operations and its capabilities of receiving knowledge, and of being influenced by truth-all these are immediately under the eye of the Creator. They are all the product of his forming skill—the objects now of his upholding power. The particular degree of capacity, the adaptation of

every faculty in each individual mind to be cultivated, and impressed by the teachings of truth, God knows with absolute certainty, and precision. Behold him, then, with the human mind, the offspring of his own creating power and goodness, directly under the focus of his own omniscient eye—its entire nature revealed in the light of that eye—all its operations, even to the secret thought afar off, seen through, and understood with a perfect, divine intuition! Who can teach like him whose knowledge has thus compassed the path of the mind, and is acquainted with all its ways; and has beset it behind and before, and laid his hand upon it?

III. None can teach like him, because God can avail himself of certain states of the mind, and of certain outward means of communicating instruction as no one else can.

It is well known, how much the success of teaching depends upon the particular state of the mind at the time instruction is communicated. "A word filly spoken, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Instructions, the most important, are often lost by being imparted when the mind happens to be in a particular state, which renders it incapable, for the time, of attending to them. So, on the other hand, some of the most favourable opportunities for communicating truth, and of making an enduring impression, are lost by our ignorance at the time of the particular favourable state of the mind which we would teach. In the same manner we fail of employing the particular means of instruction that would be best adapted to be successful in a given case. No finite teacher can know, with certainty, numerous secret states of mind in the individual pre-eminently favourable to the inculcation, and the reception of divine truth. But the infinite God labours under no such disadvantage. He not only knows the adaptation of truth to the mind, and the general nature and original susceptibilities of the mind, but he is intimately acquainted with its most secret and transient states, and emotions; -all its thoughts and feelings, at all times, are "written in his book"-are subject to his all-comprehending, all-penetrating inspection. With a knowledge so familiar and perfect as God's, respecting all the varying successive conditions of the mind, how easily can he avail himself of the favoured moment, and ingraft the truth upon the mind, when in a state the most favourable for receiving and retaining instruction. How many of the righteous in all ages have blessed him in time, and will adore him through eternity, for that incessant omniscience which watched the secret workings of their hearts, and seized upon some temporary state known only to him when the saving truths of the gospel were successfully taught to them. Who but God knew that unsuspected, unprecedented state of the Sandwich Islanders' minds, just previously to the arrival of the American missionaries amongst them? A pagan people renouncing their idols, and disgusted with the orgies of heathenism! Just at this crisis, while they were in this state, the strong hand of his providence sent them the heralds of the cross to teach them Christ crucified.

Thus God knows, with infinite accuracy, the entire, hidden history of every mind. Every successive thought and feeling, however transient, passes imme-

diately under His comprehensive gaze, and with infinite skill and tact he can avail himself of the very state that will secure complete success to His teaching. So with this perfect knowledge of the various states of the mind, He can avail himself of those outward means of instruction best adapted to a particular state of the mind. In the means that we employ to communicate truth, we often "draw a bow at a venture." We sometimes attempt to teach an individual from the works of creation, when he is in a mood only to be instructed and benefited by contemplating the ways of God's providence, or the direct truths of His holy word. We know not the secrets of the heart, the silent and often changing states of the mind, and how should we know what particular means of instruction would be best adapted at a given time, and in an individual case? But God's unerring wisdom enables Him to select and employ those external means precisely fitted to be most effective in every particular case where they are applied. The mind, with all its capacities and present feelings, and the works of creation, of providence, and of grace, with all their adaptations, are open before the Lord, and under His absolute control. What should prevent Him from selecting from this wide range of instrumentality, just those means that are most eminently fitted to convey truth with triumphant success to the soul. When His omniscience sees the heart softened or subdued, in view of the beauty or sublimity of the landscape by day, or in view of the more solemn and august grandeur of the heavens by night, how easily and appropriately can God speak then in the murmuring brook, reveal His loveliness in every flower and shrub, mirror His own calm and bright image in the expanse of waters, or shine from every star that studs the diadem of night in the glories of His eternal power and Godhead, and thus teach, most impressively, the lessons of His wisdom, benevolence, and might. When the mind. from any cause, is disposed to contemplate the dealings of God, and recognise His hand in the events of life, and almost every mind has such moments, how readily can God then, in the course of His providence, introduce, just at that juncture, a prosperous event, whose winning lesson of goodness will melt and gain the heart, or an adverse one, whose lesson of just severity will teach most effectively the folly, guilt and presumption of rebelling against God, and bow the soul in submission to Him. So He who sees at a glance all the adaptations of the truths of the Bible to every variety of feeling in the mind, can select and bring to bear upon that mind, those very truths that will "be as a nail fastened in a sure place," truths that will shed celestial light and spiritual life through the soul, teaching the sinner his condition and prospects, his duty and destiny, and transforming him into the image of his God. "Who teacheth like Him?"-whose knowledge includes every secret state of the mind, and who has at command all the grand resources of creation, providence, and the scheme of redemption, from which to choose the means of man's instruction.

IV. No one can teach like Him, because God can employ an agency to give truth access to the heart which no one else can employ, the agency of the Holy Spirit. In our attempts at teaching, we ad-

dress the ear and the eye, and hope thus to affect the heart. We have to employ language and symbols that appeal to the mind, and can affect it only through the medium of the senses. Our power is limited to the impressions which we make on the external organs. We have no access to the mind directly. We have no means of exerting a direct influence on that mysterious connexion between impressions on the senses, and the sensations or emotions of the mind which they are adapted to produce. Could we communicate immediately with the mind itself, and find our knowledge and our feelings brought in contact with the mind without going through the medium of the senses, how much greater might be our influence in teaching and controlling others. But all our efforts stop with the outward senses, the mind itself lies beyond our direct control, and free and independent of any constraint from us, it voluntarily yields to, or resists the impressions which we make on the senses. But God has an agency that reaches the mind and the heart directly, without the necessity of addressing the external senses. "The Spirit of God searcheth all things." The Holy Ghost has an immediate access to the soul. Its control over all the susceptibilities of our intellectual and moral nature is direct and absolute. It can make its silent visits to the mind, can pervade the mind with its mysterious presence, can sway all the powers of the soul, opening the understanding, quickening the conscience—rectifying the reason subduing the heart, and rendering the whole man meek and docile, without addressing the eye and the ear, or necessarily depending on the senses as the medium of its influence. This is obvious from the

fact that the same truths presented in the same manner, and that have failed a hundred times to produce any abiding or salutary effect, become, on certain occasions, the means of the soul's conversion. The difference in the result is not at all attributable to any difference in the outward administration of the truth, but simply to the direct immediate influence of the Holy Spirit on the mind itself. Now with such an agency as this, omniscient, omnipresent, that can penetrate and pervade the whole mind with a direct influence in no way dependent on the senses, that can affect every susceptibility of the soul, and control all its states, what should hinder the teaching of God from triumphant success? Besides, this is "the Spirit of truth," the Spirit that dictates those divine truths that are to be taught to man. It knows the relations of truth to the susceptibilities of our nature. the adaptation of particular truths to those states of mind which it produces by its own direct influence. And it is a part of its sacred office, to take of the things of Christ, and show them to the soul, to lead man into all truth. What then should prevent the Holy Spirit from winging the arrows of truth with unerring aim? What should prevent His teachings from reaching the heart, and making man wise unto salvation? Who can teach like God by the sublime agency of the Holy Ghost? No wonder that His "doctrine shall drop as the rain, and His speech distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass;" for this glorious agency of the Holy Spirit, like the silent but powerful elements of nature, all-pervading, is operating unseen, and by irresistible laws, is accomplishing the enlightenment and redemption of souls.

V. Lastly.—No one can teach like him, because God employs mightier sanctions than any one else to enforce his instructions. Most minds evince a striking indisposition to make acquisitions of useful knowledge. In teaching the ordinary branches of education the pupils have to be stimulated by hopes and fears-by the prospect of rewards and punishments. But all the motives we can bring to enforce our instructions in human or divine knowledge are temporary and comparatively trivial. We can tell those whom we teach of the pleasures of learning the advantages of knowledge-to stimulate their love of happiness and their hopes,—and we can tell them of the miseries and disadvantages of ignorance to operate on their instinctive aversion to pain and their fears. But we have no great sanctions of our own that we can urge authoritatively upon them to secure the effect of our instructions. Now the sanctions of God, like himself, are infinite. In his first lesson with the sinner he meets him with the astounding declaration-" Hear, and your soul shall LIVE." The implication is, that if you refuse to hear God's teachings, the penalty of your refusal is eternal death! God has perilled the life of your soul on your hearing, or refusing to hear his instructions. This is a tremendous alternative, and puts an infinite difference between God's instructions and those of any other. Your eternal all is at stake in this matter! It is not left to your option whether you will hear or forbear. Results, vast as the happiness or the misery of your whole being for time and eternity, are to follow your reception or rejection of God's teaching. To win upon your love of happi-

ness, and your susceptibility of hope, God tells you, if you hear him, your soul shall live. A new spiritual life in the play of its happy and vigorous functions shall commence within you, "as a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." You shall have righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost now;—the favour and friendship of God on earth, the protection, and all the kind provisions of his providence,-communion and fellowship with him on your earthly pilgrimage,-his shield to defend you from its temptations,—his consolations amidst its trials and sorrows, -his strength to sustain you under its conflicts,-his grace to make all things work together for your good, and to give you a glorious victory over death, your last enemy. Beyond that, he opens to you the splendours of an eternal heaven, with its untrammelled progression in knowledge, holiness and bliss, and offers himself as your exceeding great reward there, if you will hear the voice of his teachings now! On the other hand, God has brought tremendous motives to operate on your fears. It is with infinite emphasis that Jehovah hath said—"He that refuseth instruction, hateth his own soul!" That soul shall remain now under the evils of spiritual death. It shall be cut off from communion with God-his frown will rest upon it-his protection be withdrawn from it amidst the dangers and trials of life—his consolations withheld from it amidst its conflicts and sorrows-"the stars in their courses shall fight" against that soul in its pathway through the world, and in death it shall struggle alone, abandoned of God, and a prey to all the forebodings of coming wrath. And beyond that, God

discloses the gloom of an eternal hell, with its rayless, endless night of ignorance, desertion and exile from God, and holiness, and hope! O what tremendous sanctions to enforce his instructions! Who can teach like that God who holds in his hands the interests and destinies of the soul for two worlds; and who can bring all the happiness of obedience, or all the horrors of disobedience in time, and all the bliss or all the wo of the soul through a whole eternity, as the sublime and awful sanctions by which to secure the success of his teaching?

We learn from this subject, in the first place, how great is the privilege of Christians, of whom it is said in the Scriptures-" They shall all be taught of Gop." "Who teacheth like him?" What a teacher! The infinite God!! with all the resources of omniscience and omnipotence at his command! What shadow of excuse has any Christian for spiritual ignorance?-for being "a child in understanding?" What apology has he for not advancing beyond "the first principles of the doctrine of Christ?" How will he account for not growing in knowledge, privileged as he is to have God as his teacher? What an inestimable privilege! Christians, when you are sensible of your remaining ignorance, and deplore your proneness to err-when you are perplexed to know your duty, and when you thirst for the knowledge of divine things, then grasp, by faith, the blessed truth, that God is your teacher. Come in the meekness of children, and with a gracious docility, sit at his feet, and learn of him. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." What stores of spiritual knowledge

you might acquire under such a teacher! What a power might his teachings exert on your Christian character—what a transformation into the knowledge and true holiness, which constitute his own divine image! How much more intelligence and advancement in the divine life-how much more of spiritual strength and of well directed activity would mark the church on earth, did Christians eagerly yield up their whole souls to the teachings of God! what heights of knowledge in the present life might they not attain, did they fully avail themselves of the instructions of that God who holds the mind and the heart, with all their susceptibilities, in one hand, and can fashion them to any state at will, and who holds in the other hand the resources of creation, providence, and redemption, and wields them all at his pleasure, to impress on the soul the lessons of eternal truth, and fit it for ultimate perfection in knowledge! And what a glorious prospect does this subject open to the believer in a future world! God, in the unclouded glories of his own nature, will be the teacher there! All "the deep things of God," in all worlds and systems of worlds throughout his vast empire, will be unveiled to furnish lessons and illustrations on the stupendous themes of thought and of emotion that are to engross the intellect and the heart of holy immortals! An eternity of such teaching will yet bring the redeemed spirit to see universal truth face to face, and to know even as it shall be known.

Finally. What appeal shall be made from this subject to the impenitent who will not hear Him who speaks from heaven? If you, my dear hearers

of this class, have hitherto turned away your ear from your God, can I hope that you will lend it to me now? No! Heart-rending as it is, I must close by simply quoting from His oracles the awful decision which God has made and recorded for the warning of every one who continues to refuse his teachings. "He shall die without instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray."

SERMON XIII.

THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED INSECURE.

"Surely thou didst set them in slippery places."-PSALM IXXIII. 18.

THAT the enemies of God should enjoy so large a portion of temporal prosperity whilst in active hostility to their Maker, is often a matter of surprise and perplexity even to good men. Indeed one of the mysteries of the present economy is how a holy God, bound to frown upon and discourage sin, can exercise so much long-suffering and tender mercy to the wicked. This was a subject of great perplexity to the Psalmist. It threw him into temporary murmuring, and unbelief. "Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." To this rash though momentary conclusion the Psalmist was led by confining his views to the present, temporal allotment of the wicked, especially as contrasted with his own adversity and afflictions. But God did not permit him to entertain permanently this limited and partial view of the subject. The Psalmist gives us an interesting account of the

manner in which his mistake and error were corrected. "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God: then understood I their end." God opened his eyes in the light of the sanctuary to see the ultimate end—the closing catastrophe of all this tantalizing present prosperity of the wicked. As soon as the Psalmist looked beyond the present moment, he was convinced that he had made a false estimate of the prosperity of God's enemies. He exclaims, "Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places. Thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment. They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image!" He thus became deeply convinced that he had been unnecessarily excited, and had made a false and exaggerated estimate of the prosperity of the ungodly. "Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins: so foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee." He now saw how insecure was the prosperity of the wicked, and how soon it would be succeeded by a desolation and destruction the most appalling.

I propose, in the subsequent remarks, to present some considerations, showing the insecurity of the prosperity of the wicked. "Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places." The whole significancy of this metaphor refers to the insecurity of the wicked in their temporal prosperity. The chances of a sudden and sad reversal to them are the same as the chances of falling are to an individual who stands on an exceedingly slippery precipice.

I. That the prosperity of the wicked is extremely insecure, may be argued from the fact that it is not founded on the favour of God. Temporal favours, I know, are often interpreted as an evidence of Divine approbation on their recipients. When the wicked prosper and increase in riches-when the cup of their common blessings overflows-when they have more than heart could wish, and their eyes stand out with fatness-when an unclouded sun pours its beams of gladness on their way, they are prone to mistake it for the light of God's countenance and the smiles of his approval. Yet God has guarded against this mistake by most express instructions: "No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all. There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good, and to the clean and to the unclean-to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not." God once granted Israel a king and royal splendour in his wrath, and on another occasion, "he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls." Whatever may be the wise and benevolent purposes which God designs to effect by the prosperity of the wicked, that prosperity is not founded in his favour to them personally! It is granted to them on other grounds altogether-My ungodly hearers, your continued life and health, your homes and domestic comforts-your happiness resulting from the ties of kindred—your social joys—the blessings of civilization and refinement—that competency or wealth which supplies you with all the means of physical gratification and personal aggrandizement, are not conferred on you, because God has any

complacency in your character as impenitent sinners, or because he connives at your rebellion against him, or means to let your transgressions pass unpunished. These are not the favours of a reconciled God. Notwithstanding all the rich treasures of his goodness which he is lavishing on you constantly, it is a solemn truth, that "God is angry with the wicked every day." These blessings are no evidence of his approbation toward you! Your entire worldly prosperity, however bright and dazzling, must not be mistaken for the smiles of approving Heaven on your guilty career. That prosperity not being founded in the favour of God, must of course be insecure. That God, who has an absolute control over every element of your physical comfort and temporal prosperity is your enemy. He can arm every atom by which you are surrounded, with a sting to avenge his insulted majesty, and make the stars in their courses to fight against you in your impenitence and rebellion! What security, then, can you have in your worldly prosperity? Will God always nourish you and bring you up as children, when you strike the envenomed shaft into the very bosom that cherishes you? May not the limit of his goodness in your case soon be reached, and all the purposes to be effected by your temporal prosperity be speedily accomplished? Whether the exuberant temporal favours which he bestows on you, be intended to give to the present world a specimen of the riches of his goodness to the evil and unthankful, or to try you and prove your hearts, or to test the faith and patience, the confidence and submission of his own afflicted people, may they not soon fulfil these designs and be for ever recalled from you, their guilty abusers? So long as your prosperity flows not from the favour and faithfulness of a reconciled God, ought you not to feel that you are set in slippery places, and that the tragic hour of sad reversal draweth nigh?

II. That the prosperity of the wicked is insecure. may be argued from the uncertain and temporary nature of the very elements of which it is composed. As it has no foundation in the favour of God, so it has nothing spiritual and permanent in its nature. It is a prosperity disconnected with the moral and immortal part of man. It does not consist in "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost "-it is not the high and satisfying consciousness of well doing-it is not the rejoicings of a pardoned, redeemed soul with a sense of the divine favour, a feeling of being possessed of "durable riches"-with the faith and hopes, and triumphs of the gospel, and the prospects of a blessed immortali-This is spiritual prosperity, a prosperity whose very elements are permanent as the being of mind, and immutable as the purposes and grace of an unchanging God. No; the elements of the worldly prosperity of the wicked are infinitely diverse from these!! One element of this latter prosperity is the good opinion of others. How many are placed in offices of honour and emolument, and raised to a giddy and dazzling height of worldly aggrandizement by the popular voice. The only security they have that they will retain that enviable eminence, is in the stability of public opinion! And yet the autumnal winds that career along the shores of the ocean

are not more variable, fickle and capricious than popular sentiment respecting individuals. The very man who to-day is borne to the pinnacle of fame and of fortune, on the loud hosannahs of the multitude, to-morrow may hear the hoarse and indignant murmurs of that multitude vented in the exclamation, "Away with him, crucify him, crucify him." And yet how many are dependent on a cause as uncertain and insecure as this for all their worldly prosperity! In what a multitude of instances are men dependent, in some way, on the opinions of others for their prosperity in the world. This is equally true of that friendship and affection which may indirectly constitute an important element of earthly prosperity. The history of the best portion of society shows that there is no stability in unsanctified friendships. "Trifles light as air, a word, a look unkindly taken," may dissolve the spell that once bound fond hearts together, and promised to be permanent as life.

Another element of this prosperity is the honesty and trustworthiness of our fellow men. Confidence in our fellow men, is indispensable to that enterprise, by which we gain worldly prosperity. This is the reason why in a barbarous state of society, where no man will trust his fellow, there are no instances of accumulated fortunes. All those resources by which individuals grow rich, are so far under the control of others, that if they were never to be trusted, those individuals could never take one successful step in the road to wealth. But how often do the fairest appearances of honesty and trustworthiness deceive? This also is an exceedingly uncertain, insecure ele-

ment. How many have been bereft in an hour of all they possessed, and beggared for life by the dishonesty and villany of those in whom they confided! Another, and the chief element of the worldly prosperity of the wicked, is riches. And we know what striking epithets Divine revelation applies to these to indicate their nature, - "deceitful uncertain riches." The word of God and the history of the mutations of human fortune, alike testify that "riches take to themselves wings and fly away." We have but to look at the amazing reverses—the blighted hopes and prospects, and the multiplied wrecks of estates, amongst the mercantile and manufacturing community for the last ten or fifteen years, to convince us. that nothing can be more uncertain than the treasure laid up on earth. This lesson has been trodden in upon the mind by the feet of time, and illustrated and exemplified by the ever shifting fortunes of the world! Contemplate all the elements which form the prosperity of the ungodly, and you will find that in their very nature, they forbid the rational hope of permanency. They are essentially temporary and uncertain in their character, and leave the prosperity which they constitute, "baseless as the school-boy's dream." When looking at these elements as the only foundation of the prosperity of the wicked, we feel the solemn emphasis and pertinency of the exclamation, "Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places."

III. The insecurity of the prosperity of the wicked appears, thirdly, from the fact that the very habits to which that prosperity gives rise, may acquire such strength as to destroy it. Take

as an illustration of this, the man whose prosperity consists in the results of a successful ambition. The love of conquest, power, and influence, has been growing into a fixed habit, and gaining fresh accessions of strength at every step in his ambitious career! While this habit was confined within given limits, success attended all his efforts. But the intoxication of success ministered new stimulus to his ambition, and the habit at length acquired a gigantic might, that, overleaping the boundaries of reason, and of probability, drove him upon those mad aspirings which proved his utter ruin. The history of the world is full of melancholy examples of this description. Napoleon Bonaparte is an illustrious instance of the power of that habit of overgrown, lawless ambition, which in one luckless hour can ruin the splendid fortunes of an empire. This is the man, of whom it might emphatically be said-"I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree, yet he passed away, and lo! he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." This man, who once shook every throne of Europe, and held its nations in awe of his influence, was impelled by the might and the agony of his ambitious habit, to that fatal step which turned the whole tide of his fortunes, and drifted him to a solitary isle in the ocean, to die an execrated exile there! The terribly illustrious destruction of his splendid prosperity, was wrought out by the power of the very habit which that prosperity cherished. equally true of the habit of acquiring wealth. moderate desire to obtain the good things of this life, is the great spring to healthful activity and enterprise.

While this desire is kept within legitimate bounds, men generally do what is termed a "safe and prosperous business." But when it becomes the love of money—a passion for gain—and success for a season forms the habit of accumulating, that habit soon acquires an indomitable energy, and under its violent impulses the man, no longer content with the slow, though certain gains of ordinary industry, embarks and loses his all in some splendid speculation, that promised an immediate and overgrown fortune! How many ruined estates within the last thirteen years, confirm the truth of this position, and show how the very habit of accumulating riches, can acquire a might that, Samson-like, in its blind rage. can seize upon the pillars of its possessor's prosperity, and bury the whole edifice in hopeless ruin. Again: how soon do the habits of extravagance and prodigality cherished by the prosperity of the wicked, destroy that prosperity? How many large estates have been utterly squandered in a few years, and their heritors reduced to the worst condition of pauperism, by the strength which those habits of prodigality, produced and cherished by prosperity, soon acquired. prosperity, then, contains in itself the very elements of its own speedy destruction. But there is another habit, the very opposite of this, growing out of, and strengthened by the prosperity of the wicked, equally destructive of all the enjoyments of that prosperity that is, avarice. When the habit of accumulating acquires such strength that riches become an object of intense desire for their own sake, and not for the sake of the enjoyments they may procure, then there is an end to all significancy in that man's outward prosperity. He becomes the victim of one of the most restless and tormenting passions of fallen human nature. His days are consumed with corroding cares and distracting solicitude—his nights with anxious vigils and harassing fears over his heaps of gold. His soul is contracted within that narrow barren circle of parsimony, which denies him all the ordinary comforts of life. His very sickness is unpalliated by those things necessary to its mitigation, lest the purchase of them should diminish aught of his hoarded treasures. He lives on in the self-denial, privation and drudgery of a slave, and pursues a course of the most unwearied and joyless industry witnessed under heaven! Now is it not obvious, that the fearful energy of this avaricious habit, nourished by his prosperity, can blast all his treasures, and render him a wretched starveling in the midst of princely abundance? Contemplate then, my hearers, the habits to which the prosperity of the wicked gives rise, and their rapidly increasing strength, which arms them with the certain power to destroy the very prosperity that cherishes them, and decide whether God has not "set" sinners "in slippery places!" Their very efforts to climb higher, hurl them down headlong in hopeless ruin!

IV. That the prosperity of the wicked is insecure, may be argued from the fact that their own consciences are not thoroughly reconciled to their prosperity, and the pangs and forebodings of conscience can soon imbitter and destroy the very essence of worldly fortune. However men may persuade themselves that temporal favours are the tokens of God's smiles and approbation, this persuasion cannot last. God

has so constituted the conscience, that it cannot be permanently bribed with gold. In the sunniest hour of prosperity to the wicked, this power of man's moral nature can bring clouds and darkness over the soul. The prosperous wicked, as well as other men, have their moments when conscience speaks. They have their periods of fearful misgivings of heart. They feel that all is not right. They know, in some instances, that their gain has been ill-gotten, and that the blessing of that God, who commands men to be honest, and who loveth righteousness, cannot rest upon their possessions. Conscience tells them that far above their eminence and the splendours of their worldly prosperity, are the dark frowns of a just Jehovah,-that they have abused the rich blessings of his benignant providence, and incurred his righteous displeasure—that all their treasures cannot bribe him to swerve from the eternal principles of rectitude, and to withhold from their disobedience and transgression a "just recompense of reward." They feel that theirs is not the prosperity, the safe, stable prosperity of the righteous. Conscience warns them that this worldly prosperity may be their only portion-all that they will ever receive from the munificence of a benevolent and merciful God! and that hereafter, in a ruined eternity, when their immortal agony shall wring from them a prayer for a drop of water to cool their parched tongues, it may be said to each one of them, "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things." All the glare of present prosperity cannot blind the eye of conscience to these images of terror that rise in the future. It will occasionally take the alarm, and when

once its fears and forebodings are excited, all their treasures cannot quell them and restore quiet to the mind. How soon the pangs of conscience under a sense of present guilt for abused blessings and its terrors and apprehensions of the future, can effectually annihilate every joy that worldly prosperity can afford to the soul! How many have been rendered so miserable by the stings of conscience, that the glitter of their outward circumstances only served as a tantalizing contrast to the gloom within! What this side a world of wo can furnish such a picture of superlative wretchedness as the man loaded with the bounties of heaven, and having more than heart could wish, and yet his conscience festering under the conviction that God's approbation is not in all thisoverwhelmed with the sense of guilt for having abused and perverted this exuberance of Divine goodness, and quaking under the apprehension that his very prosperity will render his ultimate perdition more illustriously dreadful! Now when we think how much there is in the administration of God-how much there is in his holy oracles, and how many incidents constantly occurring, adapted to arouse conscience and bring it into agonizing play, and then think how completely its anguish and forebodings can destroy the power of temporal prosperity to minister its accustomed gratifications and annihilate all capacity to receive comfort from this source, and drive its maddened victim to desperation and suicide, we cannot fail to feel how insecure and uncertain that prosperity is! "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places," for they carry with them a power inwoven with their nature, that can cause their feet to slide, and cast

them down in mental depression from the loftiest pinnacle of earthly fortune.

V. and Lastly. The known uncertainty of life haunts the wicked with a dread that destroys the baseless joys of their prosperity. Wealth has no power to redeem its possessor from death and the grave—and the wicked themselves know and feel this! Their ample treasures and their strong palaces repel not the approach of the Great Destroyer. The uncertainty of life is just as great amidst all these, as amidst the stinted provisions, and miserable hovels of the poor. With impartial tread death comes to the threshold, and knocks alike, at the door of the palace and the cottage. The prosperous wicked, see death's doings among themselves, and it is striking to notice what a deep temporary emotion, the death of one of their number occasions in survivers. They know that he is torn from all that ever ministered to his enjoyment, exiled from all his earthly possessions, a homeless, shelterless wanderer in a future world. Images of desolation are associated with his departure from earth, overwhelming to their imaginations. They feel for a moment the force of God's declarations respecting such a one; "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." "When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away-his glory shall not descend after him." "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return, to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour which he may carry away in his hand; and this also is a sore evil that in all points as he came so shall he go, and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?" The wicked

know that the thread of life is all that binds them to their coveted, idolized worldly prosperity—that that thread once severed, they are as completely separated from all the enjoyments which wealth can procure, as though they had never had a connexion with earth! Now with the multitude of things around them to snap that brittle thread, and the numerous illustrations of the utter uncertainty of life which the history of every day furnishes, how can the wicked, when they cling to existence with so fond a tenacity, avoid that dread of being torn from their possessions which will mar and destroy their prosperity? As they look at the dire uncertainty of life, they know that God has set them in slippery places. And as they think of the awful privation of being driven away from their earthly treasures, the overwhelming dread of this destroys all taste and capacity to relish the sensual joys which their ample resources furnish. They are "all their life-time subject to bondage, through fear," till at last that which they "feared comes upon them," and plunges them deep in endless misery! There they learn the awful truth of that Divine saying, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." What a hollow, deceptive, dangerous, prosperity this, which an hour's operation of conscience, or of sober reflection, on the insecurity of life, can utterly destroy; or if enjoyed undisturbed by these till the last, will only bring down upon the soul a more aggravated perdition!

If such be the nature of the prosperity of the wicked, if this is their portion—then we see from this subject, in the first place, how criminal it is for the Christian to be envious of it, and murmur at his own

temporal allotment. Why should a soul enlightened from above, blest with the presence of God and the hope of heaven, covet the prosperity of God's enemies? Would you have God give you your desire, but send leanness into your soul? Would you have him set you in slippery places rather than plant your feet on the eternal Rock, and establish your goings? Would you deliberately take the perishable riches of earth in preference to the infinite resources of Divine mercy and grace? Would you exchange the present peace and protection of God, for the corroding cares and powerful temptations of worldly abundance? Would you exchange "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," for the palace which worldly wealth could purchase for you? Would you risk the fearful final plunge in the deeps of perdition, for the pleasure of standing a few moments on the slippery elevation of earthly aggrandizement? If not, then Christian, cease to covet the prosperity of the wicked, or to murmur at the pains and ills of your present allotment. Your poverty and privations-your "light afflictions which are but for a moment, shall work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," whilst "the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." enough for you that GoD is your portion, "for their rock is not as our rock, our enemies themselves being judges." He is your sun and your shield, "the Lord will give you grace and glory: no good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly." smiles and the favour of God, are better to you than the treasures of empires without them. The poverty and sorrows of this life, cannot affect your title as an

heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ, "to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens." Let submission, faith, and hope triumph over all present troubles, whilst you anticipate the rest, the riches and the joys of a blessed immortality!

FINALLY.—My dear impenitent hearers, if the prosperity which you so eagerly covet, and for whose attainment you sacrifice the eternal interests of the soul, be so unsatisfactory and insecure, then will you not be persuaded to seek a better and more enduring portion? In the light of this subject, how melancholy is your condition! The most that earth can do for you, is, to set you on slippery places, where your feet will certainly slide in due time! When you have actually reached the highest pinnacle to which your worldly aspirations can carry you, you have no security that you can stand there a moment! Your very success may prove your ruin! At best, your elevation is only to add a more tragic disaster to your ultimate and certain fall! Your abundance, if you make it your god, and die sacrificing at its shrine, will only be the means of forming an agonizing contrast to the penury and the pangs of an eternal poverty in the world to come! My dear ungodly hearers, God offers you a better, a more secure position in his empire-an ampler and more satisfying portion to your souls. He offers to take you off the slippery places where you now stand, and fix you immoveably on that "chief corner Stone, elect and precious," which he has laid in Zion. He offers you pardon and peace, righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost

now. He offers you his favour and protection through life—the rich treasures of his grace and mercy to meet your every want while on earth, and the richer glories of an eternal heaven after death. He offers his Son as an all-perfect Saviour, and all the ample, inexhaustible resources of that eternal life which is in Him. He offers you Himself, in all the plenitude of the God-head, as your "exceeding great reward!!" O! dying sinner, will you reject these kind offers. and madly prefer the pleasures of sin for a season? Will you take the prosperity of the wicked, and spurn the promises of your God and the hopes of your eternity? Will you be guilty of a folly and madness infinite as this!! O by all the guilt of continuing to abuse your prosperity-by all that is uncertain and unsatisfying in that prosperity-by the weight which it will hang upon the soul to drown it in perdition, and by all the invitations and promises of God, and all the proffers of mercy and salvationof Christ and heaven, now urged upon you, I beseech, I conjure you, O my impenitent hearers, to repent and believe the gospel, take God as the heritage of your souls, and heaven as their eternal home.

SERMON XIV.

THINGS IN THE DEALINGS OF GOD THAT WE KNOW NOT NOW, AND THE REASONS ON WHICH WE FOUND THE HOPE THAT WE SHALL KNOW THEM HEREAFTER.

"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

John xiii. 7.

IT were not to be expected that man, in the present infancy of his being, should know all the reasons of God's dealings with him as a moral and accountable creature. Earthly parents, in disciplining their children, pursue a course whose bearing on the future character and destiny of the child it does not at present see. This results from three things,-first, the child's limited capacities and knowledge, second, the parent's greater capacities, intelligence and experience, and thirdly, the fact, that the parent is not governed in the measures he adopts by a reference to the child's present gratification, but to its future and ultimate good. Many things in the dealings of God with man must, at present, appear mysterious and inexplicable; for man, viewed as an immortal being, is in his mere childhood in this world, infantile in all his powers and capacities. God's dealings with him do not refer altogether to his present grati-

fication. God's scheme of moral discipline is eternal. By consequence, then, it embraces many things that are prospective, that refer to man's immortal interests and destiny. Now to creatures not only limited in their powers, as we are, but darkened by sin, and confined mainly to objects of sense, there must necessarily be much in God's great, eternal scheme incomprehensible by us at present. simple, yet expressive act of the Saviour, in washing the disciples' feet, was not perfectly understood by them. It was intended to teach them a lesson of humility, all of which they could not then learn. Peter understood so little of the nature and bearing of that condescending act of his Master, that he refused to have it performed to him; yet he afterwards saw and knew the necessity of just such a humility as that impressive act of Christ taught. It was literally true, that though he knew not the whole meaning of what the Saviour did then, yet he did know afterwards, and felt a gracious approbation of what the Saviour had thus done. "Thou shalt know hereafter." We think this phrase involves the implication, that the benevolent teachings of Christ will be continued, not only through this life, but for ever. He will remain the Great Prophet through eternity, explaining, illustrating, and justifying the ways of God to man. We have the prospect of an interminable career of knowledge, a profound acquaintance with that, to us, most interesting of all departments, the knowledge of all the great, and at present, mysterious acts in God's scheme of moral discipline over It is true in more senses than that particularly

referred to in the text, that what God does we know not now, but we shall know hereafter.

I shall endeavour in the first place, to enumerate some things in the dealings of God that we know not now, and secondly, I shall present the reasons on which we found the expectation that we shall know them hereafter.

It needs hardly be observed here, that the introduction of moral evil into a universe of intelligences originally created pure is, perhaps, the most profound, as it is, to us, the most sublimely mournful mystery in the administration of Jehovah! Why He should have permitted it to exist at all, or if existing, to prolong the deadly hostility of its power, till it should involve, to the extent it has done, the immortal interests and destinies of so vast a multitude of moral agents is, at present, a fact as appalling as it is inexplicable. But we may not dwell on so fearful a theme. I shall, therefore, proceed to enumerate some of the more obvious dealings of God with man, the reasons of which we know not now.

I. One of the things which we know not now is, why there should be so unequal a distribution of good and evil in the present life.

The bounds of every man's habitation are fixed by the Lord. It is not meant by this, to affirm that men have not an agency in modifying their earthly allotments. Prudence, persevering industry, and economy, as a general rule, are followed in the providence of God by a corresponding prosperity. So recklessness, habitual indolence, and prodigality are, as a general rule, connected with a corresponding poverty and wretchedness. But, irrespective of man's

agency or will in the matter, there is a great inequality in the lot of individuals as respects common, temporal blessings. The most unlikely, and, to all appearance, the most undeserving, are often crowned with the richest blessings of a bountiful Providence. In respect to the wicked, it is as true now as in the days of the Psalmist, that "their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish." An unclouded sun pours its light on their path-way. Their cup of temporal good overflows. "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men." And this, their bright and happy allotment, is the direct result of God's sovereign providence over them. On the contrary, we find others obviously more deserving, who are denied these temporal blessings. Like the Psalmist, "all the day long have they been plagued, and chastened every morning." The means of a mere subsistence is scantily afforded to them. In the cup of their poverty, affliction often mingles its bitter drops. Wound after wound is made in their bleeding hearts. Time, as it flies, casts on them a mournful shadow from its wings, and leaves clouds and darkness on its way. Earth, the cheerful and sunny home of others, seems to them as a strange land overhung with the shadows of death. There is not a track or lane of life, but is strewed with the wreck of their early hopes and perished joys. The heart's most hallowed affections have been blighted, and disappointment has left its tantalizing blank on all the bright anticipations which that heart once cherished. The past furnishes only sorrowful remembrances, the present numerous felt ills, and the future sad forebodings. "Waters of a full cup are wrung out to them," and in tears and toil and racking care they tread their weary way to the grave and eternity. And this, their dark and sorrowful allotment, is the direct orderings of the sovereign providence of God. Who can at present know why a just and benevolent God should distribute these temporal blessings with a hand so seemingly partial and unequal?

What He does, therefore, in this respect, we know not now.

II. The discriminations of converting grace in the case of individuals, is another thing which we know not the reasons of now. In the selection of the subjects of converting grace, God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. "One is taken and another left," on principles which we know not now. Those who have been reared in pious families, who have been instructed and trained in the doctrines and duties of religion, who are amiable and moral, and to human view "not far from the kingdom of God," are sometimes passed over in the sovereign discriminations of converting grace. They withstand all the prayers, entreaties, warnings, reproofs, tears and throbbing anxieties of parents and pious friends; they "resist the Holy Ghost," and the influence of all those ordinary means which that divine Agent uses for the sinner's conversion; the Sabbath, the Bible, the preaching of the gospel and the pastoral office. On the other hand, those whose religious education has been wholly neglected, who have been brought up in ungodly, prayerless families, who are openly immoral and profligate in their lives, who have never been trained

even to pay an external respect to the ordinances of religion, are sometimes made the subjects of renewing and saving grace, whilst the others, whom we would regard as so much more hopeful and promising, remain the unchanged "children of wrath by nature." This, I admit, is not the general rule. "God is not unrighteous to forget the work and labour of love" of pious parents in training their children for him. It is of such children, that the kingdom of Christ on earth is mainly composed. Nor is the fact now under consideration, any encouragement to the reckless and the profligate, as though their very wickedness rendered it more likely that they would be converted than those who have been piously trained, and are correct in their external deportment. Still it is a fact in the administration of God's grace, that sometimes individuals of the former class, though most unpromising, are taken, and some of the latter, with all their advantages, are left in their own voluntary rejection of the counsel of God against their own souls. And what God does in this respect, we know not now.

This is equally true in regard to the classes of society from which the great majority of converts are taken. As God effects His purposes of mercy in this world chiefly by human instrumentality, it would seem reasonable to expect that in establishing and propagating religion, He would select for this great work the talented, the learned, the mighty and noble of the earth. But God has hitherto adopted the very opposite course, so that Paul calls the attention of the Corinthians to this, as a striking feature in the discriminations of converting grace. "For ye see

your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." No mind knows now why God, in organizing and perpetuating His church in our world, should have excluded from it to the extent that He has done, the gigantic intellects and the susceptible hearts, the wealth and station, and unbounded influence of those that have figured as conspicuous characters in the great drama of earth. God's converting grace and resistless power, could have consecrated all these to His service, and made them contribute to the advancement of His cause. He could have directed the ambition of Bonaparte into the field of pure and Christ-like benevolence, and sustained him in a course of well-doing, where he would have made conquests more splendid than ever graced his military prowess, and reared monuments that would have stood amidst the convulsions of the last day, and gained a crown of glory unfading and immortal. God could have baptized the mighty genius of Byron, and made his capacious soul pour forth the numbers of a sacred poetry that would have roused Christendom to elevated and dilating emotions of piety, and that would have won, for that titled bard, laurels which the fires of the final conflagration could not blast. But God, in His sovereignty, passed such characters by, and hath chosen the poor of this world, and made them rich in faith and good works. The great majority of those who have had a name and a place in His church, have been selected from the ordinary and unobserved walks of humble life. God has thus set aside the conceited calculations of worldly wisdom, humbled the pride of man,

and carried out His designs of mercy to the souls of individuals, and promoted the interests of His church on principles directly the reverse of those which human prudence and forecast would have adopted. What He has done in this respect, we know not now.

III. A third thing which we know not now, is why the righteous should be so afflicted in the present life. I do not here refer to the unequal distribution of temporal blessings, which happens to all indiscriminately. The unrighteous, as well as the pious, are the subjects of these ills. I allude more particularly to the kind and duration of the afflictions of the righteous. It is certainly amongst the present mysteries of God's dealings with man, that the afflictions of His own people should be of the kind, and should be often so long continued as they are. We sometimes see pious parents, remarkable for their parental affection and solicitude for the salvation of their children, long and sorely tried in this particular. Through years they have prayed and wept before God, and entreated Him to convert and save their children. But the answer seems to be delayed, till hope deferred has made their hearts sick. Those children grow up in impenitence, some of them become openly profligate, and continue without God in the world, till the close of one or both of the parent's lives. What revolving years of bitterness do such parents spend! And what a tender and deep sorrow fills their parting spirits even in death, as they remember that they leave their children behind them enemies to God! Now that those parents who seem to be most concerned for their children,

most faithful to them, and most prayerfully solicitous for their eternal welfare, should be thus tried, is truly mysterious. The reason of this, we know not now. There is yet a more dreadful trial to a pious parent, than to leave behind him in a world of mercy and of hope, children that are unreconciled to God. Sometimes that parental heart whose natural affections, and all whose sensibilities have been refined and rendered more acute by sanctifying grace, has to feel the unutterable agony produced by beholding a beloved child die without giving any evidence of an interest in Christ. This, to a truly pious mind, is the most inconsolable, overwhelming of all mortal sorrows. It is almost the only sorrow this side the world of wo, to sooth which, the promises of God have made no direct provision. Why God should ever thus afflict one of His own people, we "know not now."

Again, we sometimes find the warm-hearted Christian, who is peculiarly fitted to relish all the joys of home, to appreciate more than other men the reciprocity of his wedded love, and all the endearments of the domestic relations, grievously crossed and tried in these very particulars. He suffers an early and aggravated bereavement of his partner, or if they both live, it is only for him to witness the death, one by one, of his too sanguine hopes, and the blight of his heart, by the acrimony that has taken the place of the law of kindness, and to drink more deeply from the bitterness of his domestic cup, filled to overflowing by the superadded ingratitude, rebellion, and disobedience of children. How many homes, from causes like these, have their mysteries of maddening misery, though to the casual

observer, they may seem to be all sunshine and bliss. But this is a more insupportable affliction, when it is a Christian wife and mother who is thus tried. She has so few resources to mitigate her retired and uncomplaining sorrows, she is so peculiarly dependent for her happiness on the reciprocation of her sympathies and domestic kindnesses, her empire is so exclusively that of the heart, that when household wrath, bitterness, strife, and cold neglect blight its best affections, her peace and hope for earth are wrecked beyond redemption. The delicate and concealed woes of pious wives, the details of their unmurmuring grief and hidden wrongs, and the secret record of their bruised spirits, will form an astounding chapter of disclosures at the bar of God. Can any one know now why, in His righteous providence, God should permit one of His own devoted, defenceless female servants to be placed, and held through life, in such circumstances of severe domestic trial?

Again, we find some who are most zealously and perseveringly engaged in well-doing, whose character and influence tell on the best interests of society, whose time and labours would seem to us to be of the utmost importance to the church and that community with which they are connected, afflicted with tedious and wasting sickness, called away from their spheres of benevolent activity, confined to their homes, cut off from physical comforts, and consigned to months, and sometimes to years of grievous bodily pain, which is terminated at last only by the release that death gives to the sufferings of the righteous. Why such a kind, and such a duration of sufferings, should be necessary in the case of those who seem to

live nearest to God, and to be most devoted to His glory and the interests of His cause in the world, we know not now. These are parts of our moral discipline that seem mysterious and inexplicable at present. In this respect clouds and darkness are round about the Almighty. "His way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known." His judgments are a great deep, which mortal line at present cannot fathom.

LASTLY. The time and circumstances of the death of some of the righteous, is another thing in the dealings of God which we know not the reasons of now. The providence of God in the death of his saints is often as dark and inexplicable as his dealings with them during life. Behold that ingenuous, lovely young man, who has early consecrated himself to God: his heart, under the pure constraining love of Christ, is set on entering the holy ministry. He glows with zeal for God, and melts in heavenly compassion for the souls of sinners. He commences an education to qualify himself for extensive usefulness. He enters with a sacred enthusiasm on his studies—he pursues them with an unwearied activity and with a perseverance that knows no point of pause or cessation. With toil, and pain, and privation known only to himself, he at length completes both his collegiate and theological course. What an object of interest is he now to his friends and to the church-to earth and heaven. With "the dew of his youth" fresh upon him, and in the morning vigour of his manhood—with ardent hopes and lofty aspirations—with talents of the first order—a mind cultivated and enriched with the best stores of

knowledge human and divine-a man of God thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work: panting to enter on the high and noble duties of the sacred office. What an object of interest, of hope, of promise-what an unspeakable comfort to the pious father and mother, who have reared him amidst prayers, and tears, and tender anxieties, and watched him with a yearning and consuming solicitude till the present moment. And now he has arrived at the very point when he, his parents, and the church are about to realize the consummation of all their devout wishes respecting him. But lo! in this very moment of purest sunshine, when all creation seems to smile and to hail with ecstasy the commencement of that youthful career which promises so much glory to God and good to man, death seizes this illustrious victim, and confines him a prisoner in its cold and silent halls! His sun goes down at noon, and parents and friends, the church and the world, bereaved and bleeding at heart, feel the disastrous darkness that ensues!! What blasting of hope, what blotting out of promise, what mockery of all human nature's noblest schemes and loftiest aspirings are here! And all this under the immediate control of an infinitely benevolent God! What he does we know not now. Such cases of death amongst the most hopeful and lovely of the saints is not a rare occurrence. And what involves it in so much more perplexity to our view, is to notice the opposite characters that are often permitted to live to an old age. The worthless and wicked, whose lives seem a nuisance, the pests and curses of families and neighbourhoods, the undefinable class of hangers-on to the skirts of decent society,

fools and fops, the indolent and stupid, the drones and dregs of the race, are often allowed to fill up the full measure of man's allotted time on earth. Why these things should, at present, characterize the providence of a benevolent God, we know not. But, will the veil which now conceals the reasons of these dealings of the Almighty, never be removed? Will clouds and darkness rest for ever on his ways? No; what he does we know not now, but we shall know hereafter.

This introduces the second general topic suggested by the text, viz. The reasons on which we found the expectation that we shall know these things hereafter.

I. All analogy shows that the successive dispensations of God rise each above the other, and give brighter displays of his character and dealings, and we may therefore expect in a future state to know many things that we know not now. dispensation previous to the fall of angels and of man, exhibited only the amazing power, wisdom, and benevolence of God in creating, upholding, and blessing, rational beings. In the apostacy itself, the infinite justice or holiness of God was brought to view, by the punishment which he inflicted on the fallen. In the dispensation over men after the fall, the great and glorious attribute of mercy was brought forward from the retirements of eternity, and displayed to an intelligent creation. Here was a new and fuller disclosure of the character of God, than had been witnessed in the former dispensation. Now, this is true of every successive dispensation over man in the present world. In the Jewish dispensation, which succeeded the patriarchal,

how much more clearly was the character of God known, and how much plainer were the great truths of religion, the promises and prospects of a Saviour, than in that former patriarchal dispensation? We, ourselves, can judge how emphatically true it is that "life and immortality are brought to light" by the gospel dispensation, which succeeded the Jewish. How much more of the character and ways of God, of his great and merciful purposes in the scheme of the gospel, do we know than did the most gifted and enlightened minds under the old dispensation? Now this shows us that God has so arranged all his dispensations over his intelligent creatures, that each rises above the one preceding in the clearer disclosures and fuller revelations it gives of his character and ways. If such be the fact, then, may we not reasonably expect that the future state of the righteous, which is to succeed the present dispensation, will be one of increased light and augmented knowledge? Will not that dispensation which is yet to come, follow the analogy of all that are past, and give us clearer views of the attributes and dealings of the great God? Will not the shadows that rest on a part of his ways to man now, then flee away, and Jehovah make a more bright and satisfactory display of his own perfections in the unclouded light of that future and blessed economy? The New Testament itself warrants us in no doubtful terms to expect this. Is it not to this very point that Paul is speaking, when he says, "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face, now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." Yes, the future dispensation which is to succeed this, under which

we now live, is to be one of glorious light. Mystery will vanish there; perplexity will no longer invest the character and ways of God, even to man's apprehension. Jehovah will come forth in those new revelations of glory in which all his dealings with the righteous will appear as a transparency satisfactorily seen through, and reconciled, and rendered perfectly consistent with the infinite wisdom and benevolence of his nature. We have then the strongest reason to expect that though what he does we know not now, yet we shall know hereafter, in that future and brighter dispensation. Progress, clearer development of great principles, and new and more stupendous disclosures, are the grand characteristics of God's eternal government!

II. A second reason why we may expect to know many things hereafter which we know not now, is that the minds of God's people, are at present evidently being trained for future and more extended spheres of knowledge. God has the intellect as well as the heart of his people under a great system of instruction and discipline in the present state. The vast and multiform works of creation address the senses, and appeal to the soul as the great diagram by which God would teach the first lessons in the knowledge of himself. Pervaded as all his works are by the evidence of infinite wisdom, benevolence and power, presenting as they do such multitudinous adaptations to the comfort and happiness of man, they furnish a fruitful source of instruction to the pious and contemplative mind. Earth, air, and ocean, sun, moon, and stars, form the splendid alphabet, struck off by the Almighty hand, to teach his people something

of his own eternal power and Godhead, and to train their intellect to expanded and comprehensive thought. When they have learned some of the invisible things of God, by these things that are seen, and become acquainted with the wonders of creating goodness, then the great Book of Providence is open to them. Here the dealings of God become, if I may so term them, the great practical experiments, by which he illustrates his own glorious attributes, and explains and exemplifies the great principles of his government, over men in the present world. Here the Christian's mind is trained to understand the wonderful manner in which a wise and benevolent God effects his counsels, and accomplishes his purposes respecting man-It is astonishing to contemplate the intellectual discipline derived from a careful observation of the doings of Divine Providence. The mind here obtains a knowledge of those grand general principles, on which God will act in the treatment of his intelligent subjects, through an eternal duration. Many of these principles point to a future and immortal state, as the condition of their perfected operation. instance, the principle of retribution, which is clearly discoverable in the present providential dealings of God, refers to a future scene for its full and perfect operation. The mind is thus trained to contemplate the government of God, as only in its commencement, here, and as destined to extend into eternity for its consummation. And is it not obvious, that by thus training and disciplining the minds of his people, and exciting in them hopes and aspirations of growing in knowledge, God is preparing them, is literally schooling them for a future and more extended sphere of

knowledge, where they may expect to know many things which they know not now? This is still more probable when we think of the great truths of God's word as another source of instruction and discipline to the minds of Christians. While the sacred oracles begin with "the first principles of the doctrine of Christ," they do not end here, but carry the mind on to the more retired, profound and awful truths of revelation. The Holy Spirit, in connexion with the Scriptures, "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God," and shows them to the regenerated mind. Here the mind is trained to contemplate God, in the brighter manifestations of his glory, as displayed in the great plan of human redemption. It becomes deeply interested in the developments and progress of this plan, and learns that it is a plan, to be completed only in a future and eternal state. It pants to comprehend more of the wonders of this great scheme, and is trained to thirst for the perfection of knowledge. Yea, the Bible discloses to the Christian that advancement in knowledge here is a duty, and an accelerated progression in knowledge hereafter, is a part of the bliss of heaven. Now does not all this training evidently show, that God is preparing the minds of his people for a higher and more extended sphere of knowledge hereafter, where they will necessarily learn and understand many things which they know not now? And what, in that future state, will be a more interesting subject of knowledge to them, than the unravellings of the mysteries of God's dealings with them in the present life? To know the reasons of those perplexing and inscrutable dispensations, which tried their faith and patience

here, to see and understand the completed issues of those great principles in the schemes of providence, and of grace, but imperfectly presented here, will be no inconsiderable item in the bliss of a redeemed soul in heaven. The training and discipline, then, which God is giving to the minds of his people in this world, entitle them to expect that though what he does they know not now, yet they shall know hereafter.

III. FINALLY. A strong reason why we may expect to know hereafter, what we know not now is, that God's regard for his own character would seem to require him yet to justify his ways to man, and to show the reasons of many of his dealings with us here, which we "know not now," The gratification of God's own benevolence, and the happiness of the intelligent universe, depend on the views which rational beings take of his character. Were there just cause to doubt whether God were infinitely righteous and supremely good, this very doubt would chill the ardour of cherubim and seraphim, silence the songs of heaven, and spread over the intelligent creation more than a sepulchral gloom! Now, some things there are in his dealings with men. at present, which to short-sighted mortals, seem to militate against the goodness of God. If God be allwise, all-powerful and infinitely good, then why should so apparent imperfection attach to his administration over our world? Why there should be that unequal distribution of good and evil, to which we have adverted-why virtue should be permitted to suffer and lie so long depressed, and vice allowed to prosper and hold on its guilty way in triumph, till the close of life—why the righteous should be so long and so severely afflicted, and why the young, the amiable, the pious, full of hope and promise of usefulness to the church and the world, should be suddenly cut off, on the threshold of their benevolent career, and the hardened, indolent, profligate pest, spared, and permitted to grow gray in his iniquity, these seem strange things in the dealings of a holy God with man, and appear at present to cast a shade on his infinite benevolence. Regard to his own character, then, requires God to vindicate these his ways to man, and to remove this cloud from round about him, by disclosing to an admiring and adoring creation the reasons of his conduct in these particulars!

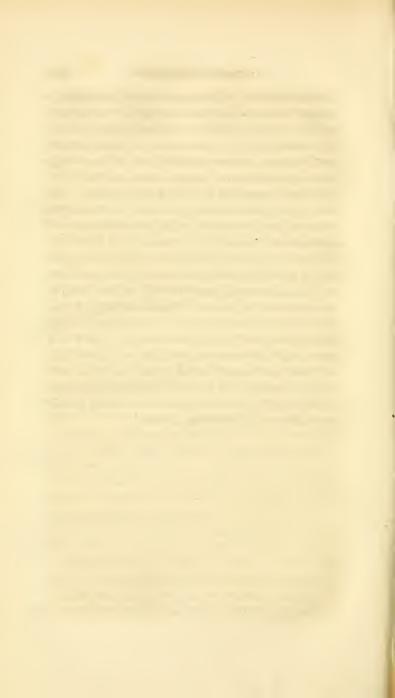
But this he has not done and will not do in the present world-for "it is the glory of God to conceal a matter," now in this state of probation; and this concealment, and partial present darkness, is intended as a salutary trial of faith and a test of man's confidence in submission to that almighty Being, whose ways are past finding out. Yet we have a high assurance that God will make glorious developments hereafter. For in a future state all the great preparations and arrangements for the display and vindication of Jehovah's perfections will be completed, and he will come forth from the clouds and darkness of his august pavilion, and shine out on the view of the intelligent creation in new aspects of glory. Then the great mysteries of providence and the perplexities of this state of moral discipline will be unravelled. Then we shall know, and approve, and admire the reasons of his dealings with us in the present life. Then we shall see how holy and

good was God in permitting suffering virtue for a season to be trodden down and depressed, and prosperous vice to triumph and to take advantage of his long-suffering and patience. Then we shall know and be perfectly satisfied with the reasons of God's conduct in all the trials and afflictions of our lives. We shall know hereafter what great things he has done for us, even in those very dispensations that now seem most dark and perplexing. What an eternally augmenting happiness to us, and what brighter manifestations of his own glory he will then bring out as the grand issues of our sorrows and darkness here!! There God will show us the finished results effected by that comprehensive system of universal providence, by which all things worked together for our good in the present world. Not a bodily pang, not a sorrow of the soul-not an hour of cloud and sadness but will then appear to have been so ordered and overruled as to promote our highest, our immortal interests, and to prove God's eternal love and faithfulness to his people! O what may we not expect to know hereafter with the infinite God for our teacherthe mysteries of providence and the wonders of redemption the subject-the vindication of Jehovah's own character the object—the light of heaven the medium of vision, and the duration of eternity the measure of our seeing face to face, and knowing even as we are known!!

We learn from this subject, in the first place, what reason the Christian has for a calm and unqualified submission to God in dark and trying circumstances. Our limited powers will not permit us to penetrate the clouds which at present

are round about the Almighty, as he moves on the vast affairs of his universal providence. things in our own personal history are perplexing, and severely trying to our nature. What God does, we know not now. There are many things in our moral discipline, whose tendencies and bearings on our spiritual interests and final destiny we cannot now understand. But there is a glorious "hereafter" for which the soul is preparing, where we shall know all the reasons of the Divine dealings with us in this world. There God will justify his ways to man, and we will see that we have never felt a pain, shed a tear or had a trial that did not turn to our ultimate good. and manifest the infinite glories of the character of our What abundant reason have believers to exercise a calm submission to God in the most trying circumstances. They have no cause to judge "any thing before the time till the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness." With a holy confidence in him, they can quietly await the issues of the sorrows and conflicts of this mortal state. All mystery will one day vanish from the dealings of God to them; and wisdom and goodness, mercy, faithfulness and truth shine conspicuously from the darkest dispensations of providence here, and shed glory on the character of God, and enhance their happiness hereafter in eternity.

FINALLY. We see from this subject, what a glorious prospect of progress in knowledge is before the redeemed mind. The soul not degraded and brutalized by sin, instinctively thirsts for knowledge. Our capacities for knowing, are the most cultivable and expansible of all our faculties. The employment of these capacities in the acquisition of knowledge is one great source of intellectual enjoyment in the present life. But the range of mind here is very limited. Its connexion with a frail body, and those natural barriers which enclose most subjects of knowledge on all sides, render a progress commensurate with its desires impossible in the present scene. that bright and boundless "hereafter" to which the redeemed soul looks forward, will furnish a scope of advancement ample as the immensity of God's do-All the deep things of God, in all worlds, minions. will be opened for the mind's investigation, and with its dilating, immortal powers it may address itself to the work of a progression in the knowledge of God and of the universe till, some time hereafter, it shall know more than the mightiest angel in glory now knows, and have an eternity still beyond, in which it will study and expand, and brighten, and glow with divine knowledge, till in immortal transports of bliss it will exclaim, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"



ADDRESSES.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE FUNERAL OF MRS. SARAH KEIM, WIFE OF MR. JOHN KEIM, OF PHILA-DELPHIA.*

THE event which has convened us on this occasion, is one of no ordinary interest and solemnity. In the departure of any immortal spirit from this world of probation, there is a strange, a mysterious, an awe-inspiring interest! The change which we witness on the tenement of clay it leaves behindthose deep inscrutable ties of kindred which we feel to be severed—the associations that cluster round the departing soul, and the eager yet undefined conjectures that follow it into the veiled and eternal future on which it enters, place the death of any mortal amongst the most truly tragic events in human history! But besides all this, the deceased may have borne a character, sustained relations, filled a sphere of usefulness, occupied a space in the circle of the domestic affections, and been at last taken from earth by a series of prolonged sufferings, which greatly enhance the mournful interest that attaches to death in ordinary cases. It is no exaggeration for me to say, that during the five years of my

^{*} Mrs. Keim had long been a most consistent, active, useful member of the First Presbyterian church, N. L., of which the author was pastor, till near the time of her death. He feels that this address, hastily written on the occasion, is far from giving a proper delineation of her character, or from doing justice to her blessed memory, which he cherishes with an increasing affection and admiration for the high Christian excellencies it recalls.

pastoral life in this church, no death has occurred of so striking a character, and so eminently fraught with materials for deep, Christian reflection, and practical instruction, as the decease of our beloved sister. whose remains are here with us to-day. I know that it will be but fulfilling the benevolent wish cherished by her while living, for me to make this an occasion of drawing profitable instruction from the teachings of God, in this afflictive dispensation. In his dealings with this dear departed saint, it cannot be doubted but that God had great ulterior purposes to accomplish, extending beyond the present limits of mortal comprehension. Respecting these hidden purposes of Him "who worketh all in all," it is not my intention to offer any conjectures. The history of the affliction and decease of our lamented sister, and the character of her piety, furnish matter for obvious reflection and intelligible instruction. your attention is now invited.

I. The case of our departed friend shows that, at present, we are not to expect to know ALL the reasons of God's dispensations towards individuals. It is true, in more senses than one, that "his thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways," and that what he does we "know not now." "Clouds and darkness" are often "round about him," even in his dealings with his own beloved children. "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter;" and in some respects "he giveth no account of his ways to any." Why it should have pleased him to have laid his afflictive hand so heavily upon her, to have called her away from the large sphere of her benevolent activity, in which her expansive charity

and steady zeal found so incessant and joyful employment, and to have confined her to the narrow precincts, and the sad monotony of her sick chamber for years—why he should have destined her to so fearful an aggregation of physical pains, unmitigated from the first even by the slenderest hope of recovery and perfect restoration, and why her worn and exhausted frame was detained from its return to its kindred dust, and made strangely tenacious of life so long after it seemed ready to be dissolved, are questions whose answers are kept amongst those "secret things which belong unto God." Our duty today as Christians is to bow reverently to the majesty which conceals them, and to say with holy submission and adoration, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

II. The event which has called us together to-day, shows the daring impiety of judging of persons' spiritual state by the outward dealings of Providence towards them.

The disposition manifested by the Jews in the time of the Saviour, to think that "those whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, were sinners above all men who dwelt in Jerusalem," is the disposition of depraved human nature, limited to no country, and confined to no period in the history of the world. Spiritual pride, self-complacency, and self-righteousness, are at this day prone as ever to interpret severe and unusual affliction, in the case of a professing Christian, as a certain evidence of God's displeasure for hypocrisy or a want of all sincere piety. Though Solomon has said that, on this point, we can know nothing from all that

happens under the sun, and though God himself has commanded us to "judge nothing before the time," and to judge not at all that we be not judged, yet there is an impious and uncharitable spirit which undertakes to decide what the spiritual standing of an individual in the sight of God is merely from the outward dealings of Providence to him in the present life. A spirit that undertakes to interpret God's meaning or design in such dispensations as confidently as though it had been admitted into the infinite profound of his secret counsels!

Now in the history of our loved, departed sister, God indignantly rebukes the blasphemous temerity that dares to make this the rule of its judgment. exemption from suffering and outward prosperity and happiness, were the infallible criterion of being favourites with God, then our departed sister would be excluded from the number, and the wicked, "whose eyes stand out with fatness," and who "have more than heart could wish," must be regarded as Heaven's selectest favourites! By this rule of judging where would be ranked those, an epitome of whose history the Holy Ghost has given in these emphatic terms, - "destitute, afflicted, tormented?" How then would it be true that "through much tribulation we are to enter the kingdom of heaven?" No! "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." As they enter the New Jerusalem, it will be said of all the redeemed-"These are they that have come out of great tribulation." In one respect our religion is a religion of sorrows. We have to be "partakers of Christ's sufferings," to fill up or complete his human woes, to

"bear about in our own bodies the dying of the Lord How misjudged to suppose that a soul totally deprayed in a scene of temptation, accustomed to do evil, and entangled in the meshes of sinful habit, should be regenerated, sanctified and fitted for the purity of an eternal heaven without conflict and spiritual anguish. How vain to think that we can pass through a world ruined by the apostacy, in revolt against its God, and lying in wickedness, and be disciplined for the peace and repose of immortality, without "a great fight of affliction" to test our principles, and to develop, exercise and strengthen our Christian graces; and how grossly impious to judge those who drink more deeply than ourselves of earth's bitter cup, as being for that reason "abhorred of the Lord." It was paternal love, calm, bright in the bosom of her covenant-keeping God, that ordained and presided over every stage of the protracted and severe affliction which clouded the closing years of our deceased friend's life. The faithfulness of a Father's heart tenderly yearning for the greatest spiritual good of his beloved child appointed for her so long a night of mourning, before the joyous, eternal morning broke in contrast!

III. The case now under consideration teaches us the unspeakable importance of maintaining that rigorous discipline of holy living, which will fit us to meet prolonged and deep affliction. No one knows what lengthened and severe trials lie before him in the curtained future. And the mere possibility of trial makes the precaution to prepare for it a duty. What would have become of our dear departed sister, had she, during the former years of her

life, been one of those sunshine Christians, one of those gay, worldly, "careless daughters that are at ease in Zion?" How would she have been able to pass under the cloud, that condensed its cold gloom on her for the last four or five years? How soon would she have "fainted in the day of adversity," because "her strength would have been small." Had she lived at a distance from God, with low attainments, doubtful evidences and feeble, faltering hopes of her interest in Christ, her heart entangled in the world, her joys mainly derived from it, her plans and purposes formed chiefly with reference to it, and her whole religion a kind of secondary thing, O! how could she ever have faced the furnace of affliction that glowed before her with so consuming an intensity! But who is the surviver here to-day that ever saw her courage flag, her faith stagger, or her lofty Christian spirit quail before all that was appalling in her sufferings? She met those sufferings with the unconquerable mind of a Christian heroine. Why did she enter upon them so calmly? why bow so meekly, so sweetly to the yoke? why display a fortitude greater than that which braves the cannon's mouth? For long years before, she had been disciplining herself in the school of Christ. She had learned of Him who endured the cross, and had armed herself also with the same mind. She had practised the stern self-denial of the Christian. Through grace she had obtained the mastery over all the inferior passions and principles of her nature. She had endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. She lived upon the resources of her religion; she had acquired an unwayering confidence in

God; his faithfulness and truth were her buckler. She had a bright and blessed hope of her interest in the Great Redeemer. She took hold on his righteousness and strength. She was mighty in prayer and in the Scriptures, walking circumspectly, redeeming the time, and living with her heart fixed trusting in the Lord, and her hopes and treasure in This is the secret of being able to meet the severest shock of earthly afflictions without being stunned or destroyed by the collision. Would we then be prepared for the days of darkness that may yet await us? we must live deeply devoted to God, realize in the convictions of our faith the existence of those great objects revealed to us in his word, and feel the weight of eternal realities. afflictions seem light and momentary, only "while we look at the things that are not seen," and eternal.

IV. The case of this departed mother in Israel exhibits the amazing resources of the grace of God to sustain the soul under prolonged and aggravated bodily suffering. During my visits to her, especially in the past year, when reflecting on the length of time since her sufferings had become intensely severe, it often occurred to me that perhaps one of the glorious purposes which God designed to effect by so unusual a case, was that he might thus exalt the riches of his sustaining grace, and show to all her friends and acquaintances what is the exceeding great power of real, living piety to buoy up the soul under an appalling weight of physical pain. In many respects, hers has far exceeded in intensity the most severe suffering that has ever fallen under my observation during my life. The

disappointment she experienced in her first hope of recovery, after submitting to a painful operation, by finding her disease returning almost immediately with aggravated symptoms—the exclusion from all the ordinances and public means of grace which she endured for years, the pangs of her delicate and sensitive mind at the thought that her altered appearance* was distressing to her friends, and made her an object from which the eye of love itself sometimes felt disposed to turn away in sadness-the physical agonies of the long-continued and unnatural pressure on some of the most exquisitely sensitive nerves of the human frame, her incapability of having her sufferings lulled by ordinary remedies, and the utter hopelessness which, from an early date, hung over the future, all combined to render her affliction one of the most severe to which our mortal nature can be subjected. And yet through all these years of untold bodily anguish, a glorious, unseen power was there bearing up the precious soul of our dear sister, and often making it exceeding joyful in all its temporal tribulations. Who ever saw her really gloomy and east down? Who ever heard her utter a note of despondency? Who ever saw her lips move in a whisper of complaint or murmuring? O what subduing, what sublime impressions has the visiter by her bed-side often had of the august power of God's rich grace to sustain his people in the great deeps of affliction! Her sick chamber was felt to be

^{*} To those who were not acquainted with the meek sufferer, it may be necessary to state that her disease was a polypus, or fungous growth in the nose, which greatly altered her appearance, and, by its constant enlargement, pressed upon the right eye and on the nerves of one side of the face, so as to produce a degree of suffering almost inconceivable.

a privileged place. A hallowed atmosphere seemed to be there in which were the presence of the invisible God and the secret workings of his sovereign, omnipotent grace upholding the submissive, patient sufferer, and giving her victory over ills whose weight and number seemed sufficient to overmatch the sternest hardihood of human nature!

V. and lastly on this point. The decease of our dear friend teaches us the connexion that exists between a devoted and holy life, and a calm and peaceful death. The wish to "die the death of the righteous" was not confined to Balaam's bosom only. It is common to men enlightened by the gospel. Multitudes are cherishing vague and groundless hopes on this subject, which will prove as the spider's web, when God shall take away their souls. "Be not deceived, brethren; God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap." And those who during life "Sow to the wind," in death "shall reap the whirlwind." In all cases where God's grace does not marvellously interfere at the eleventh hour, there is a strict connexion between the life that men lead and the death which they die. If they live far from God, and righteousness, they die without God, and having no hope in their death. If they live but inconstantly for God, and have the guilt of backsliding and unrepented sin on the conscience when they come to die, they have troubled apprehensions, recoilings and dismay, a great agitation and fearful conflict in the parting hour! On the contrary, a devoted, consistent, holy life, is one that has been spent in active preparation for death, and the connexion between

such a life and a calm and peaceful exit from earth is natural and obvious. "Mark the perfect man, and observe the upright, for the end of that man is peace." From the knowledge we had of our departed sister's manner of life, we would and did conclude beforehand, that whatever might be her bodily agonies, her mind would "have heaven and peace within" in the dying hour. In this we were not mistaken. Some time before her departure, when she supposed herself and was supposed by others to be dying, her tranquility was most remarkable.

Indeed, so deep and holy was the quiet of her soul, so unruffled its calm, that she tenderly asked whether it could be right for her in the deep solemnities of death to be so serene, to feel so signal a composure of spirit. I then remarked to her that this seemed, in her case, to be the direct fulfilment of that blessed promise of God, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." She conversed with her friends in an unfaltering voice. She urged a darling son, the Benjamin of the family, to seek an interest in Christ and to secure salvation, and did it with a calm collected, maternal tenderness and yearning of affection which I trust he who was the object of it will never forget. Though I had not the privilege of seeing her during the last few days while the gradual work of dissolution was going on, yet I was informed that her Christian equanimity, her calm, peaceful confidence in God, continued unshaken till the end. And was not this just such an end as might reasonably have been anticipated for her? Her long, consistent, devout, active life of piety, though it purchased not the favour, yet it prepared her for the signal victory which God gave her over the last enemy. He granted her the gracious reward, and when heart and flesh were failing her, became the strength of her heart, as we trust he is now her portion for ever!

"How blest the righteous when he dies, When sinks a weary soul to rest!"

It may be permitted, on this occasion, in addition to the topics of instruction on which we have dwelt, to add a few words respecting the character of our

departed sister's piety.

This will be done not for the purpose of eulogizing the dead, but of benefiting the living. It would be a violation of that spirit of retiring modesty which characterized the deceased to attempt a mere eulogium on her worth. But I know it to be in accordance with her wishes while living that I should make any use of her case after her death which might tend to exalt God's grace and strengthen the confidence of Christians in their glorious and mighty Redeemer. It is but discharging a duty to the church, of which she was so long a worthy member, to dwell a few moments on the character of one whose graces reflected honour on the communion to which she belonged and adorned her own walks of usefulness within its pale.

I remark in the first place, then, that the piety of our departed sister was strikingly consistent. It was harmonious, symmetrical; not overgrown in some parts and stinted in others. It did not consist in a great zeal for outward observances, attendance on numerous public meetings, whilst the retired duties of the closet and the sphere of the wife and the mother at home were neglected. She was no officious, itinerant female exhorter. She was a pattern in the

duties of every day, secluded, fire-side piety. It was here her light shone with steady, modest lustre. She gave to all the duties of religion the appropriate place and due proportions which constitute a well ordered life. If she were biassed in favour of any one class more particularly than another, it was the unobserved, unostentatious duties that belong to the Christian wife and mother in the domestic circle, and where true excellence is the rarest attainment of modern female piety. While she was a messenger of mercy to the sick, the poor and the afflicted every where within the range of her acquaintance, she blest her home with an influence which a ministering angel could not supply!

2. Her piety was the religion of principle. It did not consist in those impulses which external excitement brings to bear upon some, and which constitute all the religion that many members of the church seem to possess. A noisy, exoteric, spasmodic piety this, hardening the heart of its possessor, and in the eyes of the world, injuring the cause which he espouses. No. Hers was not the piety represented by the rush and the roar of the torrent that continue only while the rain and the storm last; but a "well" springing up noiselessly, and filling the deep fountains of the soul with the calm, clear, sparkling waters of eternal life. It was a steady piety fed from a living exhaustless source, and impelling to the regular, unintermitted duties of the Christian life in all varieties of external circumstances and internal frames of mind; as conscientious and diligent and watchful in times of general decline as in seasons of the greatest religious excitement. It was a principled piety anchored in her soul by the Holy Spirit and anchoring her soul to "the Forerunner within the vail" by a "hope sure and steadfast" amidst all the tumults and turmoil of life and all the waves and billows of death that passed over her.

3. The piety of our departed sister was pre-eminently ACTIVE. It was by no means of the Stylite character. It did not consist in supine meditation, mystical raptures of vague joy, elysian dreams and imaginary revelations communicated through deep and solitary reflection. No; nor was it "the talk of the lips that tendeth only to penury." Our deeeased friend never mistook talking about religion for that piety which consists in the conscientious employment of all our regenerated, rational faculties in doing the will of God in the least as well as in the greatest duties within the compass of those obligations that bind man to his Maker. Though noiseless and unpretending, hers was a piety governed by the active purpose to glorify God whether she ate or drank, or whatever she did. It was a piety whose aggregate was made up of the daily duties of her whole sphere done. To pray, read the scriptures and attend on the ordinances of religion did not constitute the sum of her activity. These things were done rather as a preparation for and an impulse to the details of activity that extended through longer periods than those occupied directly in devotional services. Like her divine Lord, she "went about doing good," without lifting up or causing her "voice to be heard in the street." Her life was a tissue of well directed Christian activities. Her busy spirit never knew one of those languid intervals of repose that crave public excitement or amusement to pass the time away. Each day brought its task, and it was cheerfully and faithfully done. In her case the law of pious activity seemed almost as uniform and incessant in its operations as a law of nature. And as her sphere by confinement and disease became more and more contracted it was truly affecting to see the force of her long established habits of activity impelling her not only to do all within the limits of her narrowed circle, but often urging her to venture beyond, till checked by the recollection of her diminished and diminishing strength.

She loved the work her heavenly Father had given her to do, and did it with an unwearied and joyful industry. She had a deep practical insight into the beauty and emphasis of that exquisite couplet of our own American poet, Wilcox,

> "An angel's wing would droop if long at rest, And God himself, inactive, were no longer blest."

4. It may be added briefly that hers was a truly humble piety. "Be clothed with humility," is a divine injunction not always heeded by professing Christians. And in the case of some who attempt to put it on, the garment is so exceedingly thin that the gorgeous colours of the robe of spiritual pride shine through it. But with all her zeal and activity, and with a deservedly high reputation for piety, our departed sister maintained through life a meek, quiet, unaffectedly humble spirit. Her piety was as retiring as it could be consistently with a faithful performance of the more public duties to which she was sometimes called. And in the performance of

such duties she was entirely free from any thing that savoured of self-esteem or officiousness. She had taken the Saviour's yoke upon her, and learned of him lessons that subdued pride and self-valuation in view of the best services she had ever rendered or the holiest moments she had ever spent during her Christian life. It was near the close of her life that the depth of her Christian humility was more especially manifested. Her bright and blessed hope of heaven, her peace of conscience, her profound tranquillity in prospect of death and her strong expectation of entering on that rest which remaineth for the people of God, were not founded on any views of her long and useful life, the amount of good she had done, or any merits of her own. I never witnessed a more hearty and sincere self-renunciation than hers. No one was more sensible than she of the imperfections and sins that attach to the best services of the Christian. She had "no confidence in the flesh," but "rejoiced in Christ Jesus," cast herself as the chief of sinners upon him, pleaded his righteousness, and, in the immediate prospect of death, committed herself to and confided in the sovereign mercy and grace of God through him crucified for the speedy bestowment of that gratuitous and eternal salvation after which she had so long panted.

I may remark, in conclusion, that hers was a growing piety. It must needs have been so from the characteristics of it already mentioned. A consistent, principled, active, humble piety would in the nature of the case be a growing piety. Advancement is the great law of vital religion. This is the law of all life till it has attained its acme and completed the

purposes for which it was given. "The life of God" therefore in the soul of man is necessarily progressive through the whole period of his probation on earth. Hence the propriety of the inspired injunction, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Our dear departed sister endeavoured "to walk after this rule." She was not content with stinted attainments in holiness. She availed herself of a diligent and punctual use of the various means of spiritual improvement, expecting to advance in the divine life only in God's instituted method, and relying on those appliances of sanctification which he has appointed.

Having thus taken advantage of the laws and agencies established by God to effect the result, and with an humble reliance on the Holy Spirit to give them efficiency, she moved steadily onward, "abounding more and more" in the graces that adorn the Christian's character and glorify the Christian's God. Though she seemed but little sensible of it herself, others could see the progress she made in all that is lovely and of good report in female piety. Hers was a gradual steady growth, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." It was deeply interesting to notice the accelerated advancement she made, however, after she began to bring forth those peaceable fruits of righteousness, which are the result of sanctified affliction. Not only was there a larger development, but there was a richness, a maturity, a prospective adaptation in her graces, fitting her to shine in a brighter sphere and pointing to that glorious consummation, the perfection of holiness, amongst the saints in light, in which we trust her redeemed spirit is now a joyful participant.

II.

ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN EDUCATION SOCIETY. BOSTON, MAY, 1845.

God has given to us such a physical constitution, that certain elements are indispensably necessary to its existence. Light and air, warmth and food, are essentially requisite to the natural and healthy functions of our physical structure. Subtract any one of these, and that structure would feel the void, and fail to attain all the ends for which it was designed.

Man's moral constitution follows the same analogy. Certain moral elements are indispensably necessary to its healthful existence. Spiritual light and warmth, a spiritual atmosphere and aliment are indispensable to the proper functions of our moral constitution, and to the attainment of those high ends for which it was originally destined. Subtract any one of these elements, and injury, if not moral death, will be the inevitable result to our spiritual nature.

Now, sir, an educated, pious ministry of the gospel is one of the necessaries of spiritual life. It is not a mere luxury or superfluity. The experiment of dispensing with such a ministry would be fatal; an experiment which we trust will never be attempted in our country, as it has been partially in

some other countries. It is true that the Christian ministry has always been greatly in the way of consummating those schemes of gigantic wickedness on which the minds of talented and ambitious sinners are most intent. And it has encountered the combined and deadly hostility of earth and hell, but without being displaced from that rank which, under God, it still holds, as the great agent of spiritual life to a "world dead in trespasses and in sins."

An intelligent, holy ministry has such an influence on man, in all the higher relations and interests of his mortal and immortal being-such an influence on his intellectual habitudes and conditionsuch a control over his religious opinions—such an instrumentality in the conversion of his soul and the moulding of his religious character-it has such bearings on the universal spread of the gospel-such an intimate prospective relation to those stupendous results of millennial glory yet to be realized in our world; and it so carries forward its issues on the eternal joys of the righteous and the eternal woes of the wicked, to whom it has been the "sayour of life unto life, or of death unto death" here, that it would seem but a waste of words on this occasion to argue the importance and necessity of the existence and operations of a society like this, whose object it is to furnish such a ministry to the teeming millions of our beloved country.

Whatever may be true of other countries and other states of society, where freedom of thought, of speech, and of the press is scarcely known, and where the public mind is overawed by civil power or prescriptive authority, and however such countries

may dispense with a full supply of educated, devoted ministers of the gospel, this furnishes no precedent for us. There is a stringent necessity and philosophic rationale for such a ministry in this country. For there is an excitability of the public mind and a susceptibility of impulse on the moral feelings in this country that cannot be safely trusted to the control of any influence less potent and commanding than that of the gospel in the hands of an enlightened and able ministry. The excitability of the popular mind in this country is forcing itself powerfully on the notice of the most careless observer. Of this the prevalence and rage of political and religious controversy within the last few years is ample proof. There is a commotion, an up-heaving and breaking Earth of thought and feeling here, not less ceaseless and sublime than the tumults of the ocean. tellectual action on all subjects of public and general interest, in this country is most intense. The minds of the populace seem to be under some new and unwonted impulse. They seize, with a giant grasp, on every thing within the sphere of their movements: -on matters of individual enterprise-on the affairs of civil and ecclesiastical polity—on the institutions and very organization of the social economy itself. The glow of this fervid intellectual action threatens to melt down those forms of things that have withstood for ages the influence of the ordinary elements. Now it requires neither prophetic vision nor modern mesmeric clairvoyance to see that this excitability of the popular mind will become a prodigious power for good or for evil, just according to the direction which it shall take.

The heart as well as the mind of this country is capable at present of being influenced by the most violent impulses. In the history of every nation, there is a period which may be denominated the meridian or manhood of those agitating passions and powerful prejudices which result from the struggling competitions for wealth-from the rivalry and collision of sectional interests-from the envy of rank, and the ignoble jealousies of political ambition. We seem to have entered on this perilous epoch of our national existence.-For within the last few years it has been truly appalling to witness those bursts of popular passion, and that lawless, shameless, tumultuous spirit of excitement that have actually dramatized all the affairs of life in this country, from the doings of the district school-house up to the legislation of Congress, often blending the ludicrous extremes of comedy with a supreme tragicality. Public feeling is capable of being driven on now with tremendous momentum, by causes which twenty-five years ago might have expended all their force without attracting notice.

Excitement is the order of the day—the very element in which the great heart of this nation beats with a quickened and morbid violence. Popular sensibility has become diseased, and like the morbid sensibilities of the human frame in sickness, if not soothed and reduced within natural and healthy limits, will exmaust and prostrate all the best energies of the body politic.

Now what influence can successfully grapple with the intellect and the heart of this country under the mighty and maddening impulses that agitate them and sway their movements? None but that of the gospel preached by an educated, able ministry, and accompanied by "the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." If the excitability of American mind is even diverted from that devotion to mercantile enterprise and pecuniary adventure which has procured for us with too much reason the reproach of being a nation of speculators, of idolaters, bowing down to "The Almighty Dollar," it will be by that gospel which anchors its great principles in the human conscience; elevates the thoughts to spiritual objects, and fires the mind with lofty aspirations after "durable riches and righteousness" in the heavens. This is the only power that can give to the excitable energies of mind an elevation and a scope more congenial to their own native mightiness; that can bear them up in its ascending car to that purer atmosphere and brighter sunshine of our spiritual nature, where they can pursue, unclouded and undisturbed by the darkness and the din of the regions below, the exalted themes of thought embraced in revelation, and feel the vital warmth of those ennobling emotions of piety which the gospel alone can inspire.

The gospel also, preached by an educated, qualified ministry, and accompanied by divine power, forms the only check and balance that can be employed to equalize the movements of popular passion and prejudice in this hey-day of their intense excitability. Apart from this, mere education, general intelligence, penal laws and public sentiment will impose no safe and certain restraint upon them. These will prove but as the green withes on Samson's arms. Con-

fine these passions and prejudices within the strongest walls and the most massive gates that human power can rear, and "like him of Gaza," they will tear up "those gates with the posts" and carry them away "up the hill" of their impetuous career. Nothing but the mighty and eternal sanctions of the gospel, plied with all the tact and skill and fidelity of an intelligent, powerful ministry, can overawe these passions, and reduce and confine their movements within safe limits. Nothing can effectually quiet the violent throbbings of the public heart in this country, but that "peace of God" which is only to be found in a pure and vital Christianity. Nothing can rescue its moral feelings from the unhallowed impulses that will drive them headlong into fatal extremes, but that constraining love of Christ whose sway is established only by a successful ministry. The gospel alone presents those objects, awakens those emotions, gives birth to those hopes, urges to those enterprises, and adds that omnipotence of motive which takes precedence of all other impulses on the moral feelings of a community. It alone can subsidize all the susceptibilities of deep and intense emotion belonging to our nature, and direct them in the career of glory, and honour, and immortality.

And now, sir, with this excitability of the popular mind, and this capability of violent impulse by the popular heart of this country, is it to be supposed that those who are destitute of an educated ministry and of a pure gospel will be long without a religion of some kind? Man's moral constitution, apart from any incidental enhancement of its cravings, instinctively demands a religion of some description.

-Nav, more, will have it. The moral history of the world is one vast volume of testimony to the truth of this declaration. All the egregious systems of overgrown error, superstition and idolatry, that have cursed earth since the apostacy, have arisen from and been perpetuated by the stern, uncompromising, unconquerable demands of man's moral nature for some scheme of religion. And I have often thought that a psychological history of the various religions of the globe would be one of the most interesting records relating to any of the developments of human nature. Such a history would show that the religious principle is an element inseparable from our common nature; an element which must necessarily be evolved and brought into play from the very circumstances of man's present being,-an element as liable to misdirection and perversion as any one belonging to our constitution, and an element which when once it escapes the legitimate control that God designs for it, is more erratic, destructive and irreclaimable than any of the fearful agencies of the fallen mind.

Now this is true of the religious principle generally, universally. But it deserves special notice that this principle is being developed in our country in connexion with habits of thought, of feeling, and of action, which will give to it an intensity and a movement that characterizes it in no other country on the face of the globe. This principle is not connected here with Asiatic supineness and irresolution, nor with tropical languor, luxury and effeminacy, nor with the stinted physical growth and ice-girt temperaments of the Arctic circle, nor with the gross igno-

rance of the New Zealander, nor with minds that beat against the bars of iron and the gates of brass with which despotism has absolutely hooped in freedom of thought. No. The religious principle here is brought into play in those physical circumstances that train man to activity, hardihood, love of liberty. enterprise, generous emulation and noble daring. It is connected with minds that have descended from the Pilgrims, to whom freedom of thought is their native, vital air, -minds that enjoy all the benefits of popular education and general intelligence, and that have been expanded and stimulated by the sunshine of civil and religious liberty. What may not the religious principle in these connexions and relations be and do, if neglected? What a fearful havoc of the fairest territories held out to the conquest of the church of God in this country, must be the inevitable result, if the religious principle, with the energies peculiar to it here, is permitted to mount the car, lead the way, and drive like Jehu in the career of fanaticism and imposture! Let it escape the control of an intelligent, able ministry, and seize with both hands on "the horns of the altar" of Romanism, Mormonism, Shakerism, or Satanism, in its grossest forms, and it will hold on there with the grasp of him of old, who fled for refuge from the "avenger of blood." No voice can recall it from its false and perilous position there; no redeeming influence is ever likely to reach it, and bring it back again, and couple its agency with the progress and the power of a pure Christianity. Your Society, sir, means to do something, and must do something to prevent a result so pre-eminently disastrous to all the best interests of the members of this great American community. But what you do must be done quickly. It is not a question between the influence of the gospel and the mere absence of that influence on the religious principle of this country. The alternative is not one of passivity or simple negation. The question for you to decide is, whether you will promptly fill the wide field with a ministry whose hands, made strong by "the arms of the mighty God of Jacob," shall take fast hold on the religious principle of the community, develop, discipline and direct it in its legitimate sphere; or whether that principle, at once breaking away from all restraint, shall commence its lawless career, and couple itself with and become the very animating spirit of those hideous forms of error, enthusiasm, imposture and fanaticism, that shall stalk in spectral train over the land left desolate! You owe it to God, to your country, to the soul's immortality and eternal life, to preoccupy that field with labourers who shall make it all "as the garden of the Lord."

There are associations connected with the object and the scene of your society's labours peculiarly dear to the intelligent Christian. It is the American Education Society. Its object is to discipline and qualify an able ministry of the New Testament for our own beloved country. The offerings which an educated, pious ministry brings to the family altars of a nation, and its bearings and blessed results on all the sacred charities of domestic life, give to that Society, whose sole object it is to furnish such a ministry, a precedence in our affections as natural as it is just and coincident with

the obligation to provide for "those of our own household." On the theatre of your Society's operations also cluster all the tender and delightful associations that belong to "our own, our native land." This country is unlike to all others in the world's annals in this respect, that in its organization and commencement as a nation, an enlightened and pious ministry was interwoven with the very warp and woof of society. The church steeple was one of the objects that indicated the first breach which colonial existence and enterprise made on our primeval forests. It is the land of our fathers' sepulchres, hallowed by the sleeping dust of a pious and noble ancestry, who lived and laboured, endured hardness, wept, and prayed, and died, for the advancement of those high and imperishable interests which it is the object of your Society, by means of an able ministry, to secure to our country. It is the land, too, in which we in turn are to leave our beloved children, after death shall have terminated our parental counsel and control over them, and dissolved all our terrestrial relations. O, sir, Christian parents and Christian patriots have a deep, an absorbing interest in the scene of your society's labours. It is the land in which our children and posterity are to have their social, political and religious character and condition modified and made what they shall be, by the kind of moral influence which pervades it, and the grand issues of their probation in this world shaped for the one to come. A land, too the very nature of whose institutions requires an educated, able ministry of the gospel as a given

force in their support, and a grand conservative element of society. Yes, sir, revivals of religion. pervading, pure revivals, promoted and sustained by such a ministry, are the patriot's last best hope for his country. The spirit of revivals is the only redeeming spirit of the republic. What has made New England what she is, and so different from other portions of our country in the number of her churches, the intelligence, religious character and morals of her population? What has spared her to such an extent from popular tumult, Lynchlaw, and rampant mobocracy? The profound care and liberality with which from the infancy of her colonial existence she provided for the education of a competent ministry. She shows now the blessed fruits of this her wise policy. Here in New England. church-spires glitter, and the church green greets the eve every where over her beautiful landscapes, whilst in other portions of our country, less careful in this respect, the church spire glitters as rarely as a single grain of golden sand on the vast beach, and the church green is as the sea-weed's solitary leaf on the bosom of the ocean. Yes, sir, New England is a practical, powerful verification of the sentiment, that the spirit of revivals is the redeeming spirit of this great republic. It is vain to talk of our admirable civil institutions, our incomparable forms of government, our indomitable spirit and love of republican liberty, our noble constitution and glorious union, as though these mere epithets could confer on them immortality. It is vain to tell us too that were the volcanic elements connected with the question of slavery bound in "everlasting chains,"

this would be all that would be requisite to prevent this nation from ultimate overthrow. Would that that most exciting question were settled with safety to the interests of all concerned, and especially with permanent security to the interests of the slaves themselves. But suppose this grand consummation was realized this moment, and the shouts of emancipated millions were to cleave the ear of night in coming from the gulf of Mexico to the extremities of Maine, would this alone remove that dark cloud which has been rolled up on the flight of our national eagle between his eye and the sun? or abate the violence of that storm which has driven him from his course and so inverted all his plumage, that his very species can scarcely be identified? No, sir. There are other elemental forces of social divellency and national disruption in this country, dormant now, it is true, because another part of the great crater is active at present-unsuspected, too, by the whole tribe of quack philanthropists and modern self-constituted reformers—but, nevertheless, really existing, and only awaiting the displacement of a faithful ministry and of Christian influence, to break forth into the most destructive activity.

And those who would carry their favourite measures for benefiting any portion of our country, by sacrificing the Christian ministry, and driving the ploughshare of ruin over the Christian churches, show that they know not the alphabet of the science, and have never estimated the power of these divellent forces. Now there is no adequate curb for what Carlyle quaintly calls "the distilled rascality of this planet," but those embankments which the lives and labours of an able ministry throw up around it, by proclaim-

ing the law of God, vindicating and sustaining his Sabbaths, and uttering his holy oracles in the sanctuaries of the land.

I repeat then, sir, that the spirit of a pure, pervading piety, promoted and sustained instrumentally by such a ministry, is the redeeming spirit of this great republic,-the only genius that can safely preside over our august national destinies, and preserve and perpetuate our social, civil and religious institutions. Yes, sir, if the eagle of our national flag is to wave for ever on the air of freedom, it will be by having enstamped by its side the image of the Heavenly Dove! And now, in view of this fact, am I not authorized, in conclusion, to say, that whatever other benevolent associations and agencies of this land may tire and faint in their way, your Society MUST NOT? It must know no point of pause or cessation, till it shall have actually filled the high functions of its ordination, in supplying the whole land with an educated, able, faithful ministry of the New Testament. Failure is a thought not for one moment to be entertained in connexion with the movements of this Society. It may be tolerated as a possibility in mercantile enterprise and secular adventure, but not in the grand agency of spreading and sustaining the gospel in this nation. This is an agency whose failure would be far more disastrous than the fabled failure of Phaeton when intrusted with the chariot of the sun. committed to your Society, in part, the keeping and the course of that golden chariot which is the great dispenser of those reflected rays of the Sun of Righteousness, that are yet to flood immensity with light, and eternity with glory!

III.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE FUNERAL OF MRS. CATHERINE B. PATTON, WIFE OF THE REV. JOHN PATTON, AND DAUGHTER OF JAMES BRUEN, ESQ., OF PHILADELPHIA.

When God speaks by a visitation like the one which has convened us on this mournful occasion, it is difficult for man to speak without detracting from the eloquence of the voice divine. Connected with the event of death itself in any circumstances is an over-awing, all-subduing impressiveness that cannot be augmented by what man may say. And even when attended by numerous mitigating considerations it carries with it to the human heart an appeal utterly overwhelming.

On its pale insignia no mortal eye can look unmoved. The associations that cluster around death are peculiar to that event alone. We think of severed ties that can never be bound on earth again. We think of blighted hopes that can bud and bloom no more in this cold soil. We think of perished joys that no lapse or vicissitudes of years will restore. We think of the desolations of the last farewell—of hearts divided to meet no more below the skies—of homes made solitary, and of hearths whose

lights are extinguished. We think of the darkness and solitude of the tomb-of the fearful blank in bereaved affection, and the withering loneliness of spirit as the mourners go about the streets. These are some of the associations inseparably connected with death. But the great destroyer may make such a sclection of his victims and achieve his gloomy triumph in such circumstances as to give an enhanced tenderness and solemnity to these associations, and greatly to augment the pangs of bereavement. In the instance that has brought us together to-day, we feel more than an ordinary sympathy and sorrow. Death has suddenly stretched its chilling shadow over a little family in disastrous contrast with the recent warmth and sunshine of wedded joys and all the sweets of a happy home. The sad tidings of the unexpected and premature departure of our beloved sister from her important station and newly entered sphere of usefulness has cast a deep gloom over this congregation, and created a wide-spread emotion of profound regret and grief in the community. This constitutes one of those scenes of tender, and in some respects of tragic separation by death, in which the depth and intensity of our emotions greatly embarrass our utterance. I cannot be insensible to the difficulty of meeting your expectations, and satisfying all the sorrowing hearts of this large assembly by any thing that I may say. I am reminded by the aspect of this audience, that there is a deep, pervading sympathy—a subdued and silent sorrow to which no addition can be made by any remarks that may be offered on this occasion. Each of us must feel that this is one of those instances in which "the eye affects the heart." Busy thought, quickened by the keenness of your grief, is depicting more graphically than language can portray, the whole of this exquisitely mournful scene.

We feel the utter impotency of our sympathies and our tears to sooth the broken hearts that mourn here to-day. We feel too how powerless is language as a medium to communicate the melancholy emotions and aching thoughts excited on such an occasion. And were the design of this service merely to add to the mournful interest of this scene, I would not utter another word. But the striking and solemn providence of God that has removed from us this beloved sister, like all similar dealings of His which come under our observation, is designed to teach some impressive lessons, and makes a resistless appeal to the most thoughtless heart in this assembly.

The spiritual and eternal benefit that may be derived from a proper improvement of this bereaving dispensation by mourning survivers is the only compensation for the loss which they deplore. This constitutes the only sweet that can mingle in this bitter cup—"too bitter else."

We would be delinquent in duty to God, and recreant to our own highest interests, did we not strive to welcome to our consciences and our hearts, the solemn and impressive lessons which this trying dispensation is adapted to teach. Yea, were not our dear, deceased sister beyond the reach of mortal anxieties, and were she permitted to revisit this sanctuary, and to speak and to act out the Christian benevolence of her heart in reference to this occasion, I doubt not her solicitude and prayers, her counsels

and entreaties, would all combine to urge the living to such an improvement of this mournful event. While we bow then in profound submission to God, who hath bereft us, and weep with those that weep in the bitterness of their affliction, let us endeavour to derive from this solemn event those lessons of instruction which it so eloquently teaches.

I. This death teaches us the awe-inspiring truth of God's inscrutable sovereignty. Nothing could more strikingly illustrate the fact, that His thoughts are not as our "thoughts, nor his ways as our ways," Had a council of the most disinterested, wise, benevolent individuals of our race been called to deliberate and decide on the destiny of our departed sister. they would have decided far differently from what God has done. Such a council could have urged numerous reasons against the premature death of this saint. The early period of her life, with the dew of her youth fresh upon her-the new and endeared relations which she sustained—the space which she filled in a fond husband's affections—the essential aid that her deep and devoted piety, might render to him in the prosecution of his holy calling as a minister of the gospel—the comfort she might minister to him under all the crushing responsibilities of the sacred office, and all the severe, though often hidden, sorrows and trials which he must endure—the wide sphere of usefulness, that her station and connexion with the church of Christ would enable her to fillthe benevolent plans she had formed, and the holy hopes and purposes she cherished-all these could have been pleaded in favour of her continuance on earth. And yet the great God saw all these reasons and others besides in all their force; but for reasons infinitely higher and better, determined at this time to call her hence. The only account we can give of his dealings in this case is, to use the language of the blessed Redeemer, and say-"Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." "Darkness is round about him," in this dispensation-" his pavilion is dark waters and thick clouds of the sky." What he does in this case, we "know not now, but we shall know hereafter." "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." High above the clouds that encompass and conceal the reasons of his conduct to man, shines the resplendent attribute of his adorable sovereignty. It is too bright for mortal We veil our faces and bow in humble submission and awe, as we witness its exhibition in apportioning the terrestrial allotments of our race.

II. This death teaches us most impressively the uncertainty which ever besets all the best joys and brightest hopes of earth. The joys of the domestic statethe happiness resulting from the blending of truly congenial, Christian kindred spirits, knit together in wedded love, and tasking their powers each in turn, to serve the other in all the sweet assiduities of a daily and growing affection—the hopes that spring up in such hearts, and bound onward along the green and sunny vista of future years, are the best joys and the brightest hopes which belong to this fallen world. Indeed, they recall the associations of Eden, and seem as the remaining tints of that faded loveliness, which bloomed there before the fall. In these joys and hopes, but a few days since our departed sister and her surviving, but now solitary and sorrowing, husband mutually participated; their home as happy, their hearts as glad, and their prospects as bright as are any of ours at present. But what a spell-like change has come over them!

How suddenly has the silver cord that bound them to all these joys and hopes been loosed, and the golden bowl, filled with all that could make domestic life happy, been broken! The charm has vanished like the baseless fabric of a vision, fled as a morning dream. What could illustrate more forcibly the uncertainty attending the possession of the best that earth can offer to the cravings of our nature after happiness.

"What are our joys but dreams? and what our hopes, But goodly shadows in the summer cloud? There's not a wind that blows, but bears with it Some rain-bow promise: Not a moment flies But puts its sickle in the fields of life, And reaps its thousands with their joys and cares."

III. This solemn providence rebukes the folly and presumption of those who in early life calculate confidently on length of days and unclouded prosperity. A love of prolonged existence is an instinct of our common nature. And the desire of life, within certain limits, is lawful. It is not wonderful that this desire should exist in great strength, and, like all our other desires influenced by our depravity, should become perverted. The longing for perpetuated life is the natural result of an immortal principle. The soul is deathless in its very nature—it was made for immortality, and the higher and more refined principles of its constitution are constantly impelling it onward in boundless hopes and infinite aspira-

tions. But in face of God's explicit declarations, and of all his providences that teach the shortness and uncertainty of life, the young have a presumptuous calculation on long years to come, which leads them to a perilous procrastination in the work of securing their eternal interest, and lays the foundation for hopes that will be wrecked and expectations that will be blasted, amidst the bitterest disappointments. Who had a better right than our deceased sister to expect to "live many days, and see good in them all?" Reconciled to her God, and devoted to his service—having always enjoyed uninterrupted health -settled in life with ample means of its comforts, and filling a most important sphere of usefulness, young, happy, loving and being loved and respected by all who knew her-in the morning sunshine of domestic bliss, before a passing cloud had cast a shadow over her bright allotment, yet it pleased God to call her hence, and to translate her, as we hope, to a holier, happier home in the skies. If she has thus in a moment disappeared from earth, who here to-day dare confidently calculate on long years to come?

"What bolder thought in human hearts can rise,
Than man's presumption on to-morrow!
Where is to-morrow? In another world!
To numbers this is certain. The reverse
Is sure to none."

IV. This sorrowful event teaches us all the importance of being prepared for sudden death.

Man's presumptuous calculations on the future, extend not only to the length of time which he expects to live, but to the circumstances in which he expects to die. Let those who are deferring repen-

tance and faith, obedience and submission to the Saviour, and all that is necessary to secure their peace with God, examine themselves, and see whether they are not indulging the fallacious and criminal expectation that they shall have ample notice of the approach of death. When you permit yourselves to think on this subject at all, do you not vaguely picture to yourselves a gradual decline of your health, premonishing you of the possibility that your race may be nearly run? You then think of the sick chamber, of prolonged illness weaning you from the world and directing your minds to serious things. You anticipate being gently and gradually led down to the banks of Jordan. You expect the visits and the prayers of your pastor and pious friends, till at length death will have become so familiar to your thoughts, and you will be so well prepared for it, that its terrors and its sting will be gone. Now in order to be convicted of the folly and the guilt of such calculations, you have only to look at this instance of death before you. Where was the warning in the case of our beloved departed sister? But a few days ago, who had better, brighter prospects of life, or more reason to anticipate that when death did come, there would be sufficient warning of its approach? And yet its cold hand was upon her before her anxious, affectionate relatives and friends could realize that the great destroyer had come.

Ah! how greatly wise in her, not to put off a careful preparation for it through the deceptive expectation that death would linger so long with slow and measured tread before it entered, that she would have ample time to prepare for its arrival. My dear

hearers, "be ye also ready"—ready for sudden death. At present God is warning this community on this subject in trumpet tones. I beseech you then, by all the impressive solemnities of this funeral scene, that each one of you be ready, so that when

"Thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, that moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not like the quarry slave at night
Scourged to his dungeon; but sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

V. The death of our dear sister teaches us the transcendant excellence of the religion of Christ in its power to raise the soul above the terror of dissolution and to fill it with a holy peace in the parting hour. In the remarks that I am about to make it is not my design to eulogize the dead merely for the gratification of survivers.

Those who knew the meek and quiet spirit—the modest and retiring piety of the loved and departed one whose remains are now before us, cannot but be aware that if she had been permitted to express a wish in reference to this service, she would have for bidden mere eulogy. Besides, she is now far, far beyond the breath of human praise or blame, and if her sainted spirit has any solicitude about this scene, it is that the grace of God in Christ Jesus may be magnified by it. In adverting, then, to her Christian life, and her last exercises and triumphant death, I merely wish to exalt that sovereign grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ which gave her the victory.

Ten years ago our deceased sister united with the first Presbyterian Church in Newark, N. J., then under the pastoral care of the Rev. William T. Hamilton. An appeal made by him to her in a conversation respecting the death of her dear, sainted mother, was the means of arresting her attention and leading her to the Saviour. Those who knew her best can testify that she has ever since lived as a devoted Christian. Her piety was unobtrusive, unostentatious, every where consistent, firm, humble. She loved the place of social prayer—the Sunday school—the work of tract distribution—and devoted much of her time to these and other Christian efforts. She was specially attentive to the duties of the closet. It was there that the secret of the Lord was with her. In her last sickness the grace of patience was strikingly exhibited by her, and yet such was the peculiar tenderness of her conscience on this point that she often asked her husband if he thought she was sufficiently patient. When she felt that the hand of death was upon her, and that she would soon have to leave her beloved partner, she remained as collected and calm as though no struggle of the final parting awaited her. She conversed freely with her husband respecting her feelings and prospects in this trying crisis. She remarked very tenderly that she had expected to live a little longer with him, and still had a desire to do so; but that if the Lord had determined otherwise, she was perfectly satisfied. She said that she had made her peace with God, and felt a cheerful willingness to commit herself without reserve into his hands. She expressed confidence in the blood of Christ only as the ground

of her hope, and said to that she looked for cleansing, and that though she felt herself to be a sinner, and to have been unfaithful as a Christian, yet in view of the mercy and the promises of God, and the love he had shown her, she felt an unwavering confidence that he would take her to himself. Her husband asked her if in that hour of trial, with death apparently so near, the Saviour really seemed precious to She replied with emphasis-"Yes, he does." She then conversed for some time on the subject of dying-of heaven-of their prospects of meeting in that better world, and of spending a blessed eternity together. She spoke of the short time that God had permitted them to enjoy each other's society, and yet with how much happiness he had crowned their brief and transient wedded existence. She urged her husband to be holy and faithful in the ministry, and to make it his constant effort to bring up his children for God. She calmly spoke of some domestic arrangements which she wished to be madeleft messages which she desired her husband to deliver to a number of friends whom she named—a special message to the members of this church, and to her class in Sabbath school. Her husband then united with her in prayer, and during all this affecting scene it was obvious that the prospect of death, though unanticipated but a short time before, produced neither surprise nor terror in her mind, notwithstanding she was deeply sensible of its solemnities and results. On Friday morning last she asked her husband if the physicians had given it as their decided opinion that she could not recover. replied he did not know, but that it was evident to

him that she could not. She made this inquiry through no particular eagerness to catch at the hope of life, but simply for the purpose of ascertaining as nearly as possible when the work of death would begin that before her strength should fail she might bid her friends a formal, *final* farewell. Soon after this she called all her relations and friends around her, kissed them and added a few words of suitable advice to each, and then peacefully prepared, as she expressed it, to go away to her "new, eternal home!"

From this brief narrative who can doubt of the unseen visits of the Divine Comforter to her parting spirit? Who can doubt the soothing and sustaining power of the religion of Christ in the troubled moments of death? What a holy calm was hers amidst all that is naturally agitating in dissolution! What a sublime triumph—what an eloquent testimony to the victory which redeeming grace gives us over the last enemy of our mortal nature! Behold this delicate, timid female, whom the rustling of a leaf would once have made to tremble. See her with all the sweet sensibilities and warm affections of the woman, the daughter, the sister, the wife, the mother, patient, calm, victorious, amidst the wreck of life in all these endearing relations! With one hand unfaltering she deliberately looses one by one the numerous, tender ties that bind her to friends on earth, and with the other hand she takes hold on the skies. and triumphantly exclaims, "O! death, where is thy sting? O! grave, where is thy victory?"

I may not close these remarks without addressing a few words to those more immediately concerned in this sadly bereaving dispensation. I need not make any protracted remarks to this afflicted church. The solemn, dying message of your pastor's wife will shortly be delivered to you in the melancholy eloquence of his broken heart. As a church God seems to have compassed you in the infancy of your existence with repeated affliction. This is the second painful visitation of the same kind that has overtaken you in your brief history. Jehovah has a meaning in these repeated strokes of his bereaving rod. In this day of adversity you are called upon to consider your ways, and to turn unto Him who smiteth, and seek the Lord of hosts. God has made this second appeal to your hearts that you may gather round your stricken, bleeding pastor with a holier Christian sympathy-may comfort him with the kind assiduities of that love which you owe him "for his work's sake"-may hold up his hands by your prayers-console him by "walking in the truth"and be the means of giving success to his ministry by your prompt, efficient, cheerful, persevering cooperation. The best relief that his bereaved and sorrowing heart can now obtain will be in seeing the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand-in seeing you growing in grace, built up in the faith, "walking in love as dear children," and in witnessing souls won to Christ by your and his united instrumentality. You ought not to despise these chastenings of the Lord. You ought to be a holy, devoted church. God has appealed to you before, and he appeals to you to-day from the grave and eternity. "Gird up the loins of your minds, and be sober." Seek consolation for yourselves and for your bereaved pastor in God alone. Love your dear

pastor the more now that he is stricken and smitten of God, and be at peace among yourselves. Let the sisters of this church feel their individual responsibility and dependence the more since God has taken away their head, and let them imitate her example as she imitated her Lord's. And let all this church feel the solemn call thus made on them to prepare to meet their God.

And what shall I say to the bereaved afflicted family that has lost another of its few surviving members? Human sympathies and human language can afford you no adequate consolation. On this mournful occasion let me not multiply vain words to you. To God and to the word of his grace we commend you. "He hath smitten, and he will bind up; he hath wounded, and he will heal." While your hearts feel the blank that has been made in their affections, and your eyes rest on the darkness of the grave which conceals the mortal part of a beloved daughter and sister, then think of all the mournfully sweet associations, of the holy calm and the sacred triumph of her dying hour. "You sorrow not as those who have no hope." Around her dying couch was a halo that mitigated the gloom and gilded the shadow of death itself. It was "the candle of the Lord," lighted up and shining after the sunset of the tomb, to point your peaceful anticipations to that resurrection morn when the loved and lost here will be restored, and you shall meet and be a family in heaven to part no more for ever!

And, finally, what can be said to you, my dear brother, so suddenly bereaved of the wife of your

youth! That you have the tender and deep sympathy of your ministerial brethren, of your church and of the Christian community, you know. We weep with you to-day; our hearts bleed for you under this severely trying dispensation. It would be but the natural utterance of your grief, were you to say with anguished emphasis-"I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath." "He hath led me and brought me into darkness, but not into light." My dear brother, God seems to have chosen you to the ministry "in the furnace of affliction;" but I trust there is one like unto the Son of man walking with you to-day in the midst of the flames, to prevent them from consuming you. These reiterated strokes pierce the heart with a poignancy of grief not easily borne. But, my dear brother, I trust you will not despise these chastenings of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of him. Exercise still an unwavering trust in God, and he will bring you out of these trials as gold that is purified in the fire. It does seem as though he has determined that you shall be a holy and devoted minister of the gospel, if breaking the dearest ties that bind you to earth and blasting its best joys will make you so. Let your object then be to gather the peaceable fruits of righteousness abundantly from this fearful harvest of your wo. Never forget the solemn counsel given to you by the lingering dying love of your wife. Live near to Christ, and be more intimate in your communion with him who went at the grave of Lazarus, and who can fully sympathize with you in your present sorrows. Strive to preach Christ more clearly to your charge, and to live

Christ more unequivocally in every walk of life. From those lonely hours of musing anguish over your loss which you will be tempted to spend, seek relief in a deeper devotion to God and a greater activity in your sacred calling. God has taught you the uncertainty, the utter worthlessness of all that earth can offer to the heart and hopes of man. You may now preach on this subject as you have never heretofore done, and bear a powerful testimony against devotion to the present world. God has bereft you and made earth a waste and dreary place to you, at the same time has he not greatly endeared heaven to your affections? He has placed bright lures there to win your thoughts, and hopes, and fond aspirings thither. Spirits of the just made perfect are there with whom you have been united here in the most endeared relations, whom you loved and with whom you lived as the heirs of the grace of life. Oh! can you not preach of heaven, live for heaven, and lead the way to it as you never did before? My dear brother, give your wounded bleeding heart anew this day to God; he will heal it, and consecrate you afresh even by this baptism of your sorrows, to the blessed work of your holy calling. Time is short. That heart will not be rent much oftener. God can comfort you the little while you remain in a world now so imbittered to you. He can make you useful, and teach you to comfort others with the consolation wherewith he has comforted you, till the hour of your sweet release from all terrestrial trouble shall come-till

[&]quot;Life's duties done, as sinks the day, Light from its load, the spirit flies,

346 ADDRESS AT THE FUNERAL OF MRS. C. B. PATTON,

While heaven and earth combine to say How blest the righteous, when he dies."

Beyond that bourn reunion with the loved from whom death has divided you here, perfection in holiness, the joys of the Lord and the deep and unending repose of heaven will amply compensate for all the sorrows and conflicts of time.

IV.

A PERMANENT REMEDY FOR THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE.*

IT is said to be "a calamitous distinction, but a sublime one," for man to be placed on the same arena where moral evil is at work, in the dire hostility of its power to every thing good, and for him to be arrayed in resolute antagonism to its progress and its sway. This distinction belongs to Christian man exclusively; ours being the only world, as far as we know, in a probationary state, and with a moral economy where the forces of good and evil are in conflict, and alternate success and defeat attending the one and the other in the career of their energies towards the final catastrophe. This planet which we inhabit is, perhaps, the last battle field in the empire of God where the parallel collision of great antagonist principles are working out the stupendous problems of the divine government, and displaying

^{*} This lecture is one of a series which the author wrote on the subject of the African slave trade, and delivered to popular assemblies while Secretary of the New York State Colonization Society. It was intended to follow immediately one on the horrors of the slave trade as it now exists. When not preceded by the one alluded to, it is robbed of a part of the interest it would excite. But the lecture on the horrors of the slave trade, the author has thought best to omit here in consequence of the tragic and revolting details which it contains, and which were necessary to do justice to the subject of which it treats.

that glorious prerogative of Deity which educes order from confusion, light from darkness, and makes iniquity the foil to enhance the eternal splendours of vindicated, triumphant righteousness. It would not be wonderful if in the heat of so great a conflict man in his limited capacities, and himself suffering the effects of a sad moral overthrow, should sometimes mistake the best means of coping successfully with the giant foe. That particular instrumentality which eventually proves effective in the extirpation of any of the great evils of the world, is at first but vaguely comprehended and little understood. What is popularly termed accident often leads not only to discoveries in science, but to the knowledge of that combination of forces or those moral appliances by which the gigantic evils that curse humanity are to be subverted and ultimately annihilated. This is true in reference to the means first contemplated for the suppression of the African slave trade. It were not to be supposed that with the enlightened philanthropy and active Christian benevolence which characterized Great Britain and America at the commencement of the present century, the slave trade could escape the notice of these two nations, or its enormities fail to awaken a deep and painful solicitude for its suppression. As early as 1791 the British Parliament began to investigate the subject, collect evidence and make preparations for ulterior action. length passed an act prohibiting the importation of slaves into any of their West India possessions, after the first of March, 1808. Before this date the Government of the United States prohibited the importation of slaves into this country, and declared the

slave trade to be piracy and punishable by death. England then made an effort to bring Spain to adopt a similar policy, and secured that power nominally in favour of the abolition of this odious traffic. It was now supposed that the great and decisive blow was struck, and that the day spring of Africa's redemption had visited her. But on the part of the savage pagans of Africa, the thirst for articles of European manufacture and for luxuries, and the more brutal thirst for gain on the part of corrupt nominal Christians mocked the puny force of mere legislation and parchment resolutions, and showed their triumph in the mortifying and melancholy fact, that this infernal merchandise in men had not even received a perceptible check from these great national movements for its suppression! The gain of at least 180 per cent. on all the capital invested in this now contraband commerce in bodies and souls, inspired a courage that risked the severest penalties of law, and plied the trade, in no wise daunted by these stringent governmental enactments of nations.

It was soon found that the traffic went on with no diminution in the number of victims, and no abatement, but a vast increase of its attendant horrors. "Leviathan was not to be so tamed." Then was suggested the expedient of armed squadrons on the coast of Africa, to cruise and cut off all access of the slave ships to the shores. Accordingly Great Britain and the United States each despatched a portion of their naval force to guard the ports and harbours of the western coast from all ingress and egress of vessels suspected of being engaged in this unlawful and inhuman adventure. And now with the gallant

war ships of the two most powerful nations on earth, and the British Lion and the American Eagle floating on the flags at the mast-head, and the thunder of their cannon reverberating along the coast and echoing up every cove and river's mouth of the territory, is not Africa safe from the approach of the slaver? Will the keenest cravings of avarice, or the most infatuated lust for gold, tempt the monstrous dealers in living sinews and bones to urge on their trade in the face of such terrors, and risk their all amidst such perils as these? Yes, after all this array of naval armaments afloat on the African seas, and sustained as it has been for a number of years at an enormous expense to both governments, the slave trade in Western Africa has been nearly or quite as rife within the last five years as at any time during a century! It has, as yet, received no mortal wound from the mouth of British or American cannon. Nay, its terrible energies have not even been crippled by all this marine force employed against it. Its bloody crest is still erect and daring, despite the public sentiment and national legislation of Christendom and the armed squadrons of the most powerful nations on earth hunting it down on the seas. The recent statistics of this abominable traffic show, that while it has been forced to all the vigilance, cunning and arts of smuggling, it is nevertheless now carrying off as many victims annually as it did when unembarrassed by the espionage and pursuit of armed vessels. This may seem incredible, but it is a well authenticated fact. On a certain part of the Western coast the slave trade has indeed been effectually suppressed, but by means entirely distinct from the direct in-

fluence of men of war on the seas. It seems to be the error of human nature to trust to those means of most obvious and imposing power, and to overlook those more unpretending and noiseless in their operations. And yet in this we violate the judgment which the analogy of nature would teach us to form. For what is more noiseless and unimposing than light kissing the very lips of sleeping infancy so gently as not to awake it from its slumbers; and yet what material agent accomplishes results of such magnitude and moment in the physical economy? It is not the thunder and lightning, the whirlwind, and the volcano, the deluge or the waterspout, in their terrific operations that achieve that great aggregate of results which makes the earth what it is, stored with the means of existence and happiness to myriads of sensitive and intelligent creatures. No! it is the sunshine and the gentle breeze, the early and the latter rain, the unseen warmth and the silent dews. are some obvious reasons why a naval force, however powerful and imposing, should fail of effectually suppressing the slave trade. Ships of war can never become so numerous on the coast as to form a perfect blockade. Besides, in many places not designated as harbours, the shore is at once so bold and so calm as to permit the light slave ship to run in and take her living cargo and be off on the trackless main without being seen by a war cruiser. But I apprehend that one of the reasons of this failure of squadrons to suppress the slave trade, is the fact, that the British government has offered so high a premium on the head of every recaptured slave, and so much per ton on the slave vessel, that it proves a powerful

temptation to the captain and crews of the men of war to connive at slavers so far as to permit them to go in and freight their vessels, in order that they may capture them afterwards and realize this liberal governmental bounty on the tonnage of the captured vessels and on the number of the slaves they contain. But the slave vessels being all built for fast sailing, if they can once get their cargo of human beings shipped and they under way, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred they can then escape capture by their superior speed.

The British have another reason for rather wishing to capture a slave ship after she has a full cargo on board than to prevent her from getting to the coast and shipping one, and that is, in addition to the high premium per head on the recaptured slaves and on the vessel, these recaptured Africans are sent to the British West Indies to work the plantations as apprentices or hired labourers, and the government allows so much per head for every such labourer introduced there from the coast of Africa. Now with this double bounty to be realized in case of success in capture by the officers and by every one of the crew of a British man of war, is it not highly probable that they will be tempted to connive at the shipping of slaves for the sake of the profits of seizing them afterwards? We honour human nature as much as facts will permit us to do. But it would be an extraordinary stretch of generosity and charity to suppose that this motive would be wholly unfelt by the high-minded and honourable officers of her Majesty, Queen Victoria's, government. Our own gallant officers on the African coast have no such temp-

tation; but are as much interested to prevent a slave ship from landing and loading as to capture one after she has shipped a full cargo. And yet as a matter of fact the American squadron has not to any extent till very recently been successful in seizing slavers. This is no reflection on the courage, integrity, or fidelity of our excellent officers. It is the result of the intrinsic difficulties that environ the case. a recent international arrangement of Great Britain with France, the naval force of the latter is to be added to that already employed for the suppression of this horrible traffic. But it is doubtful whether this additional force will give greater success in reaching the humane result contemplated. An armada from the choicest ships of nations could not annihilate a traffic sustained by the combined avarice of Africa herself and of all her corrupt and greedy destroyers throughout the world. Physical force is not the right kind of instrumentality to battle successfully with those evils whose exciting causes are the deprayed passions and appetites of intelligent, immortal mind. And yet it appears almost impossible to teach mankind this simple, and as it would seem to us, obvious truth. If the whole coast of Africa were completely blockaded so that not a slave should be shipped for a century, the slave trade would not then be annihilated; for the causes that give rise to it would still be in existence, and on the withdrawal of an armed force from the seas would inevitably lead to the renewal of the traffic. There is no adaptation whatever in mere physical force to remove these causes. And every principle of sound philosophy assures us that till the exciting causes are removed,

the effects which they naturally produce cannot cease. We want a remedy then for this enormously wicked traffic that will reach its origin; that will at once grapple with and destroy the causes that give it birth and sustain its being. Any thing short of this must ultimately prove a failure. But what shall this remedy be? The most intelligent philanthropists both in the old world and the new now begin to answer—"the civilization and Christianization of Africa herself."

No man has made a more laborious investigation as to the best, the true remedy for this overgrown evil, than Thomas F. Buxton, Esq., of England. conclusion at which he arrives, after his protracted and careful researches on this subject, he expresses in the following language: "With all confidence we affirm that nothing permanent will be effected unless we raise the native mind." Again, writing of Africa, he remarks-"we must elevate the minds of her people, and call forth the capabilities of her soil." One of the most distinguished African travellers, after all that Europe had then done for the suppression of the slave trade, remarks,-" Europe therefore will have done little for the blacks, if the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade is not followed up by some wise and grand plan for the civilization of the continent." Capt. Harris, of the British service, so extensively acquainted with Africa, was commissioned by his government to investigate the matter and report as to the best method of extinguishing the slave trade. The conclusion at which he arrived, after all his researches and enlarged observations on this subject, was, that the slave trade could never be

extinguished so long as the savage, pagan spirit of Africa herself was in favour of it. His conclusion is sound and strictly philosophical. It rests on a true insight into the real cause of the evil; a cause not to be reached by naval armaments nor parliamentary legislation: for though compulsory means may restrain the act, it cannot eradicate the motive. Were the whole coast blockaded, still the "African will not have ceased to desire and vehemently to crave the spirits, the ammunition, and the articles of finery and commerce, which Europe and America alone can supply; and these he can obtain by the slave trade, and by the slave trade only, while he remains what he is." Capt. Harris has therefore very wisely recommended the civilization and Christianization of Africa herself, recommended a remedy for the disordered passions of the native mind, and for its savage physical condition, as the true, efficient causes of this disgraceful and inhuman traffic.

Two things then must be done for Africa, if she is ever rescued from the ravages of a commerce in her own hapless children, alike ruinous to her and infamous to the nations concerned in it. 1. Mind there must be elevated, expanded and disciplined till it can comprehend the true economy of national wealth, and take advantage of those laws of nature which are subservient to its production. And 2, the physical resources of the country must be understood and developed, till each African chief can be made to see that for every dollar he now receives from the sale and export of his living subjects, one hundred dollars worth of produce either for home consumption or foreign commerce can be raised by them if retained as labourers on the soil.

But capabilities of mind and resources of territory are nothing in the estimate of ignorant savages; and while the Africans remain such, and know no way of obtaining the products of civilized industry but by the slave trade, that trade can never be annihilated till you exterminate the coloured race. No. The native mind must be trained, equipped, and led forth there to its grand conquest over the laws and agencies of matter, and taught its power to render them subservient to the purposes of man's existence, convenience and comfort, by extracting from the soil and gathering from the spontaneous productions of the earth the legitimate bounties which Providence bestows on intelligent human industry. But can this be done? And if done are the physical resources of Africa such as to furnish her inhabitants ample means not only of subsistence, but of wealth, wholly independent of the ungodly gain of the slave trade? Both these questions may without hesitancy be answered in the affirmative. The primary elements of mind in Africa are, essentially, what they are in similar circumstances every where else in the world. The powerful appliances of civilization, science and religion will find susceptibilities in the African intellect, and, plied long enough, will effect the same evolution of mental capacities, the same inventive powers,-the same enterprise, and will give the same general direction to the deathless energy of mind there as in any other quarter of the globe. It is a libel on the benevolence of God, to suppose that he has created a race of rational beings with so stinted mental endowments, that with proper culture they cannot be sufficiently developed and disciplined, to

avail themselves of the bounteous means of a happy temporal existence within their reach, and also to rise to those noble destinies of an immortal nature, for which man was made. In respect to the physical resources of the continent of Africa, they are amply sufficient to sustain twice the number of her present population in a state of advanced civilization, refinement and luxury.

Indeed Africa is inferior to no other portion of the globe in native wealth.—The partial and very imperfect exploration of her mineral resources shows that silver, gold, copper and iron abound in many parts of the country. - Of valuable timber she has an inexhaustible supply, and it is already becoming an important article of export.—Dye woods are found in the greatest abundance, yielding carmine, crimson, red, brown, brilliant yellow, and the various shades from yellow to orange and a fine blue.-Africa is rich in gums. Copal, Senegal mastic, and sudan or Turkey gum, can be obtained in large quantities.—Of nuts, which are beginning to form a new and important article of trade, there are the palm nut, the shea nut, the cola nut, the ground nut, the castor nut, the nitta nut, and the cocoa nut.-The palm tree grows in great numbers, and immense quantities of the nuts are permitted to decay on the ground without being gathered. Then there are valuable roots that grow with little or no cultivation .- Of these, may be mentioned the manioc, yams, sweet potatoes, arrow-root and ginger. - All the fruits of the tropics are there in variety and profusion; oranges, lemons, citrons, limes, pine apples, guavas, tamarinds, pawpaws, plantains, and bana-

nas.-Of grain, there is rice, Indian corn, Guinea corn or millet, and other varieties.-There are also miscellaneous products, such as bees' wax, ivory, Indian rubber, and in some places horns, hides, skins, tortoise shell, ostrich feathers, pearls, ambergris, amber, cotton, coffee and indigo.-Africa also contains every species of domestic animal and fowl necessary for convenience and food, and fisheries which, were they under yankee enterprise and management, would annually yield a revenue twice as great as the whole of her slave trade. But to give a complete catalogue of African products would extend this lecture beyond reasonable limits. A writer of great accuracy remarks as follows: "With few inconsiderable exceptions the whole line of coast in Western Africa, accessible to trading vessels, presents immense tracts of land of the most fertile character, which only require the hand of industry and commercial enterprise to turn them into inexhaustible mines of wealth." An individual who had spent some time in Western Africa, and become from close and careful observation well acquainted with the character and capabilities of its soil, writing to the colonists of Liberia, remarks: "The flat lands around you, and particularly your farms, have as good a soil as can be met with in any country. They will produce two crops of corn, sweet potatoes, and several other vegetables in a year. They will yield a larger crop than the best soil in America. - One acre of rich land well tilled will produce you three hundred dollars worth of indigo. Half an acre may be made to grow half a ton of arrow root. Four acres laid out in coffee plants will, after the third year, produce you a

clear income of two or three hundred dollars annually. Half an acre of cotton tree will clothe your whole family. One acre of canes will make you independent of all the world for the sugar you use in your family. One acre set with fruit trees and well attended, will furnish you the year round with more plantains, bananas, oranges, limes, guavas, pawpaws, and pine apples than you will ever gather. Nine months of the year you may grow fresh vegetables every month, and some of you who have lowland plantations may do so throughout the year."

And now in a country of such vast physical resources, and so richly blest of Heaven with every product of a luxuriant soil and a genial climate, is there any thing more necessary to annihilate her inhuman and infamous traffic in her own children, than to raise the native mind into the daylight of civilization where it can see things as they are, appreciate the exuberant bounties of Providence hitherto overlooked, and be made to understand the fact which can then be demonstrated-viz., that the labour of one man, and that not in tilling the earth, but in merely gathering the spontaneous production of the palm nut and the elephant's tooth, can earn annually a sum more than twice as much as he would bring, were he sold as a slave, and his life and industry thus annihilated to his own country and transferred to a foreign one for ever. Such an elevation of the native mind is beyond all doubt the true radical remedy for the African slave trade. This is the conclusion, I may add, the settled conviction, of the most enlightened philanthropists of the world at the present day. All human history shows that it is mind

which rules the destinies of nations. Mind reinstated, enthroned in something of its primitive sovereignty and dignity, and invested with the majesty of an enlightened conscience and high Christian sentiment, is and ever will be the elected instrument of Divine beneficence for the subversion of the powers of darkness, the destruction of the overgrown schemes of wickedness, and for the prevalence and universal triumph of truth and righteousness in the world. But how is this elevation of African mind to be effected? How is Africa to be civilized? I answer in the general, by observing the same great laws of civilization that have operated in civilizing any other portion of the human family. Civilization has its fixed laws, and if overlooked or violated in any case, their results cannot be realized. History furnishes no instance of a barbarous people left to themselves, and uninfluenced by intercourse with others, ever becoming civilized.

Fallen human nature has no inherent tendency to so refined an issue. In some peculiar cases military conquest has contributed to the civilization of the conquered. But in no form can war be regarded as the necessary handmaid of civilization. Commercial intercourse, where a country has facilities for communication with the interior, has often resulted in the civilization of a people. But the grand law of civilization operates on the social and political condition of a people, through the medium of MODEL COMMUNITIES planted amongst them, and rendered permanent in their influence on the imitative principle and emulation of the barbarous tribes. This is the law of civilization which we must observe in re-

ference to Africa. The hope of benefiting her in this respect by military conquest is out of the question: and commercial intercourse, heretofore, has been far from exerting a civilizing influence on her people. Nor can such intercourse be expected materially to benefit a population, whose country has no great highways, few navigable rivers, and, therefore, no facilities for communication with the interior. We must have the model communities planted and sustained there. The germ must be rooted in her own soil. and rear its trunk, put forth its leaves, its flowers, and its first fruits before the eyes of the savage native tribes. This is no new theory of African civilization. Near the close of the last century, Capt. Beaver, a benevolent Englishman, attempted a model settlement of civilization in Africa; but the climate soon disclosed to him and to his company the melancholy fact, so fearfully demonstrated since, that the white man's life must be the inevitable forfeit of all such attempts! Who then are to form the constituency of these model communities indispensable to promote that civilization, which alone can effectually suppress the slave trade of Africa? Experience and observation have decided that it is to be her own exiled, but now civilized, Christianized sons, whose physical structure and temperament have never been so changed by a different locality, as to unfit them to return with safety, and live in their original climate and country.

Burkhardt, the most distinguished of travellers in Africa, remarks that there is no fairer prospect for her civilization, "than the education of the sons of Africa in their own country and by their own countrymen, previously educated by Europeans." If in forming these model settlements of civilization in Africa, there were no risk of life to white men, yet on every principle of social philosophy, it would be infinitely preferable to have them composed of educated, Christian, coloured men. The associations which the native tribes have connected with white men as a privileged and superior race, would very naturally cause them to despair of successfully imitating such a race in the arts and usages of civilized life; whilst the identity of skin and national lineage with the coloured community would have precisely a contrary tendency, and would demonstrate to them, by a living example, the improvement and elevation of which the negro race is capable.

The case then may be stated thus: the true, and only effectual remedy for the horrible slave trade is the civilization and Christianization of the inhabitants of Africa herself. To effect this we must have model communities of civilized, Christian men planted and rendered permanent there; and for obvious and imperative reasons the men that compose these communities must be coloured men, the descendants of Africans. Now where shall we find such men? The men who alone, under God, can be the instruments of civilizing and Christianizing their "brethren, their kinsmen according to the flesh?" I answer, in this country. And may not preparation for becoming instruments of so great blessing to their fatherland have been one of the ulterior, beneficent purposes of God in permitting the wickedness of man to exile them and bring and bind them for a season in servitude here? Has the work of

establishing these model communities of civilization in Africa been begun? It has, under blessed auspices and brilliant auguries of ultimate and triumphant success. By whom has a scheme of so far-reaching and so effective benevolence been originated and put into execution? By those lofty and patriotic minds who organized the American Colonization Society. Notwithstanding the earlier efforts of Great Britain in the establishment of the colony of Sierra Leone, I am happy to think that our own country has a fair and equitable claim to the noble distinction of being the first to plant a community in Africa that can be regarded as in all respects a true, model settlement of civilization, republican liberty and Christianity. The following is no exaggerated representation of what has been achieved by this great American movement.

"What, then, has colonization done? It has laid the foundation of an empire in the commonwealth of Liberia. There it is-on the coast of Africa, a little north of the equator, in the central regions of African barbarism, and of the slave trade. are four colonies and twelve Christian settlements. dotting a coast of about 300 miles, extending their domain by fair negotiation, back into the interior and along the Atlantic shore, the whole incorporated into a federal republic, after the model of our own, with like institutions, civil, literary, and religious, and composed of Africans and descendants of Africans, most of whom were emancipated from bondage in this country for the purpose, some of whom were recaptured from slave ships, and a small part of whom are adopted natives that have come in to join

them. There is Christian civilization and the government of law; there is a civil jurisprudence and polity; there are courts and magistrates, judges and lawyers; there are numerous Christian churches, well supplied with ministers of the gospel; there are schools, public libraries, and a respectable system of public education: there is a public press and two journals, one monthly, and one semi-monthly; there are rising towns and villages; there are the useful trades and mechanic arts, a productive agriculture and increasing commerce; in their harbours are to be found ships trading with Europe and America, and the exports are increasing from year to year; and all this the creation of somewhat less than twenty years—an achievement of which there is no parallel in history."

Now is not such a community pre-eminently adapted to promote civilization in Africa, to develop her physical resources, to augment and give impulse to her legitimate trade and commerce, and thus to prove the great and efficient remedy for a traffic that has burnt in upon her its unmitigated curses for centuries?

On this subject the opinions of General Turner, late Governor of Sierra Leone, are entitled to great weight. Mr. Buxton, who was intimately acquainted with his views in reference to this matter, was irresistibly led from General Turner's great experience and extensive observation, to the conclusion (I give his own words) "That the true way to suppress the slave trade and to extricate Africa from its present abyss of misery, is to be found in friendly intercourse with the natives; in the encouragement of

their legitimate trade, in the cultivation of the soil. and in alliances with them for the suppression of the slave traffic." Now do not our colonies fulfil precisely all these conditions? Their intercourse with the natives is of the most friendly kind; -they encourage trade with them; -and they give them a practical illustration of the right culture of the soil on the colonial farms. The government of Liberia has also formed alliances and entered into treaties of amity and trade with about two hundred thousand of the native tribes, one invariable condition of which treaties is that the natives shall in no way, directly nor indirectly, aid or abet the slave trade or connive at it in any form,—that they shall abandon some of their barbarous usages and protect and foster American missions. Already some fifteen or twenty thousand of the native Africans have voluntarily become subject to the laws of Liberia, thrown aside the badges of their superstition and idolatry, conformed their costume and their social habits to the requisitions of civilized life, and many of them attend public worship on the Sabbath in the colonial churches.

The English language, that great vehicle of the knowledge of civilization and of a pure Christianity, has already penetrated more than two hundred miles into the interior, and awakened among chiefs and people a spirit of inquiry and a strong desire for the establishment of schools to instruct them in the arts and usages of civilized life and the truths of the Christian religion.

What a change in a little more than twenty years! The whole territory now occupied by the common-

wealth of Liberia was lately one vast theatre of slavetrading and all kinds of savage enormities. Now there is not a slave factory between the two extremes of colonial jurisdiction. It is computed that the existence and influence of this commonwealth on the western coast prevents the exportation of nearly fifty thousand slaves annually from that part of Africa. Besides, the protection and encouragement which the colonies afford to Christian missions, enables those colonies thus incidentally to exert the most certain of all civilizing influences on savage men-the influence of the gospel-and so paves the way for an indefinite progress by the natives in social, political and religious improvement. Such colonies as ours then, British philanthropists themselves being judges, contain all the elements of Africa's intellectual, social, civil and religious redemption, and constitute the grand and only effective remedy for that monstrous traffic in her children which has covered Christendom with guilt and Africa with more than funeral gloom for ages.

Now had colonization no tendency to furnish an asylum for the disfranchised coloured man of this country—no tendency to place him in circumstances where, unimpeded by prejudice and privileged competition, he can enjoy social equality, political rights and liberty with all the avenues to wealth, to civil, intellectual and moral distinctions open before him, and with all the lures to the loftiest hopes and noblest aspirations of human nature gathering their resistless attractions upon him—did this enterprise do nothing more, directly nor indirectly, than to furnish Africa with so admirable a model settlement of her

own descendants as the colonies of Liberia now present, this alone, in its civilizing and Christianizing influence on Africa herself, and in its bearings on the ultimate and entire overthrow of her slave trade. would entitle colonization to the rank which that enlightened statesman, the late Hon. Roger M. Sherman, assigned it as "amongst the noblest schemes of benevolence in the nineteenth century!" alone ought to claim for it the sympathies, the prayers and the liberal patronage of the patriots, the philanthropists and Christians of the whole civilized world! And it is this aspect or bearing of the enterprise on the temporal and spiritual interests and destinies of the teeming millions of Africa which the providence of God is now rendering most prominent and full of promise to that benighted, afflicted continent.

How true that the thoughts of the great, Eternal Mind are not as our thoughts. While we hitherto have been contemplating colonization in its bearing on the free coloured people and the slaves of our own country, and striving by it (and that too "in a great fight of affliction") to ameliorate the condition of the one class, and to secure the liberty of the other, even on a small scale, it would seem that the Infinite Mind has given an unthought-of grandeur to our scheme, by adopting it as a far reaching instrumentality of blessings to a vast continent, to the number of whose inhabitants all the coloured people here, are but as the dust in the balance. would appear that within the exterior and obvious form of our simple enterprise, and concealed from all but the Omniscient eye, laid those sublime elemental principles of Africa's social, political, and religious regeneration, which need only to be energized by Omnipotence and controlled by a hand divine, in order to work out some of the most stupendous results ever witnessed in the national redemption and elevation of human nature! How wonderful the counsels of the Most High! What if it should be found that amidst the darkness and depression of her exiled sons here for nearly two centuries, God has been calmly, silently, and unseen, just as he forms the diamond in nature, elaborating that rich gem of civilization that now begins to sparkle as a brilliant on Africa's bleeding bosom.

If there be "a thread that determines the place of every bead in the necklace" of individual and national destiny, then when Africa at last exchanges her dark zone for a girdle of jewels glittering with the light of science and religion, who shall predict that it will not be found that colonization has spun the silken thread which binds them all in their beauteous order? And if this be only in the slightest degree probable, what shall we say of the professed philanthropy that would break this thread? Is it wise, patriotic or benevolent, to attempt to embarrass or destroy an experiment for Africa's redemption, which promises to bless her hundred and fifty millions, because it will not confer immediate social and political freedom on some three millions of her hapless sons in this country? Is it enlightened, disinterested, magnanimous sympathy for the whole coloured race which dictates determined opposition to the only plan that for centuries has promised to furnish a fair opportunity for the coloured man to test

by actual experiment, what he can make himself to be in the scale of intellectual, social, and political existence, when his whole nature is free, and on an arena wide as his capacities, and free too as his nature, and every hope and aspiration, every generous impulse that can be brought to bear on his energies, is proffering him its aid?

In a future age I doubt not that the organized opposition and deadly hostility shown by some towards this noble attempt for Africa's disenthralment and regeneration will be regarded as one of the most singular and inexplicable facts in the history of this part of the nineteenth century.* And yet I am not sure but that this is the very fact on which a profound and far-sighted Christian philosopher would fix his firmest expectations of great and glorious ulterior issues. For, it is on the principle of ANTAGONISM, that the infinite God himself has wrought out some of the grandest problems of his moral government. The loyalty and holiness of Heaven's first-born sons were tested by the opposing forces of temptation and sin. And who may say whether Gabriel himself would ever have stood so high, or shone so brightly, had not Lucifer fell like lightning by his side and subjected him to the shock of opposition? What great or good thing in the empire of Jehovah has escaped the action of antagonistic forces, or been exempt from the struggles and the throes of conflict?

^{*} The author is willing to believe that some good men who are really interested in the welfare of the coloured race, have been induced to oppose colonization through misrepresentations respecting its character, and misapprehensions as to its legitimate aims and bearings. But for the one who commenced the crusade, and for those that have rallied round his standard no such charitable supposition can be entertained.

Christianity itself, in the immaculate person of its Divine founder, was hunted down by the fiercest opposition from the manger in Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary, and from the cross to the tomb of Joseph, where the rancour of Jewish hate held its jealous vigils till stunned and overpowered by the glories of the resurrection! Christ had to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself. The great Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. It is a deeply affecting thought that the light of the glorious Sun of Righteousness himself had to struggle through clouds, and "has woven its rainbows" of promise to man on a "back ground of eternal black!"

Had colonization been of more doubtful tendency and bearing (than facts prove it has been) on the present and prospective condition of long neglected Africa, one might suppose that the sympathies owed her by the Christian world would have effectually curbed all opposition, till the scheme had been fairly tested and proved by incontestable experiment to be a failure. I say, the sympathies owed her by the world. For who can avoid an emotion of strange and even sublime sorrow when musing on the mysterious and mournful destinies of that ill-starred continent, bereaved annually of nearly half a million of her hapless children, not by the visitations of natural death or by physical calamity, but by that violence and reckless rapine and murder, which are deaf to every cry save that of an inexorable and fiendish cupidity! Poor, bleeding Africa!!

> "The Niobe of nations—there she stands, Childless and crownless in her voiceless wo."

Her weeds of mourning have never been laid aside for centuries. Her cheeks have never been free from tears of the bitterest bereavement. Her long and starless night of desolation as yet has been succeeded by no bright and blessed morning!

For some inscrutable reason in the counsels of Heaven, Africa has been longest doomed to the unassuaged woes of man's moral overthrow in Eden, and has been the very last to share in that august movement which human nature under the gospel, is now making towards its triumph over the ruins of the apostacy and the attainment of its highest terrestrial destinies. Through darkness and storm and conflict, colonization has struggled and succeeded in locating on her coast the elemental forces of this grand movement for Africa. It is, perhaps, one of the greatest experiments ever made on human society! It is certainly one of thrilling, ineffable interest to earth and heaven. It aims to influence ultimately in all their dearest interests, one hundred and fifty millions of immortal minds hitherto and prospectively, as it would seem, to a great extent, beyond the reach of any other instrumentality. For aught that any man dares now predict, their hopes and happiness for two worlds may be found, in the evolution of the Divine purposes, to be involved in and identified with the success of this experiment! It aims to remove the covering from all faces, to upheave and throw off the superincumbent masses of superstition, paganism, crime and curses, that for centuries have crushed a fifth part of the hundreds of millions of the human race, into the lowest deep of moral degradation. It aims to develop the physical resources of a vast continent, to evolve and give play to the mental faculties of its myriad population, to awaken the high hopes and infinite aspirations that will fit Africa for those grand and exalted enterprises which will bring her up to the level and make her a full partner with the other nations, in all the stupendous blessings of the world's long-looked-for social, political, and spiritual millennium!

